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## DESALLE

MXGP ACE TALKS ABOUT HIS  
SURPRISE MOVE TO KAWASAKI

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MADNESS!

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## STERRY

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CLEMENT DESALLE KICKS UP A SANDSTORM  
IN THE GLAMIS DUNES  
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# C O N T E N T S



# COMMENT

We all know that racing dirt bikes is a dangerous business but never really expect any of our heroes to get hurt. I think that's partially down to the fact that we see our leading athletes as action figures who are able to bounce back up no matter what they put themselves through and also because we're unwilling to admit that it could be us who are hurt the very next time we swing a leg over our own bikes.

There seems to be no correlation between an accident and the injury it produces and we've all watched in awe as riders walk away from huge cartwheels. Then we wonder how a small tip-over could create a season or career-ending injury – take Dean Wilson for example who has been sidelined for the year thanks to putting a foot down in a corner due to his front wheel washing out. It just doesn't seem fair...

Another rider who is in my thoughts right now is Aussie Daniel McCoy. Arenacross fans might remember DMC for his AX title run in 2014 or his badass haircut and collection of cool tattoos that we featured in that exclusive interview we ran in our May 2014 issue.

Anyhoo, McCoy returned to the tour this year to race for the MVR-D Fuel Racing Husqvarna squad, got through round one okay then took a harmless looking trip over the bars in Glasgow that he never got up from. Damage to a couple of vertebrae in his lower back and resulting pressure on his spinal column left Daniel with no feeling below the waist and in need of an emergency operation – an emergency operation that came with a £20k price tag.

And that's where the good people of the motocross community came together with St Blazey MX's Steve Annear setting up a Go Fund Me page ([www.gofundme.com/y8jequx9](http://www.gofundme.com/y8jequx9)) to raise the funds needed for the op itself and then to get Daniel and his girlfriend Amy back home safely.

As things stand the page has generated £21,446 in donations from friends, family, fans and industry folk which is really pleasing to see. I'm sure Daniel would like to pass his thanks on to everyone who's already donated. To those of you who haven't then please remember that it's not too late.

Details of his recovery are a little sketchy but shortly after his operation Daniel posted this message on Instagram – "T11 and T12 relocated with screws and rods, some bone grafting done as well. Have some feeling in my left leg and have been told I'm incomplete so there's hope for more feeling as time goes on. I'm so grateful and overwhelmed with the support from everyone."

Shortly after that he posted a short video of his girlfriend Amy giving him a tow for a 'Maccas' dinner date as he was worried that the hospital food might kill him which indicates his mood and physical condition were in a much better place than they had been.

It's certainly not the first time that the moto family have come together to hook a brother up and that's really cool. It makes me proud to play just the tiniest part in such an amazing sport that's enjoyed by so many amazing people. Thanks for being awesome y'all...

**DELUXE DOG**  
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*Sully*



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# TONY

# CAIROLI

## THE SPEEDY SICILIAN FEELS READY FOR THE YEAR AHEAD DESPITE BREAKING A RIB OR TWO . . .



**H**i guys, how's it going? I'm writing to you from Sardinia, the beautiful Italian island that has hosted the first round of the Internazionali d'Italia – the most important series before the MXGP championship starts in Qatar – every year since 2014.

Many teams choose to come here in order to prepare for their seasons and there are good reasons why. First of all the weather – here the temperature is usually warm and nice, even in February when in most of Europe it is difficult to find a track that's open. There are many tracks around here and you can decide to ride sand or hardpack and if you need to do any testing you can be sure that you'll find a track free to use exclusively.

A lot of teams also use Sardinia to do their photoshoots for posters, postcards, banners and so on because beautiful sunny days are frequent even in winter. I like to come here riding and for the last few years I travel to Sardinia in January to finalise my preparations and do some testing with the team.

You may not have heard but, unfortunately, a couple of weeks ago I had an accident while I was riding in Riola Sardo, the track where last year the season started. I had a bad crash but I was pretty sure that nothing was broken and this was confirmed after I had some x-rays at the hospital.

A few days later after I went back on the bike I was still not feeling comfortable so we decided to go back to the hospital. This time the x-ray showed that I had actually broken two ribs and that meant I was going to have to stop riding for a while! I called my doctor, Dr Claes, in

Belgium and he said that it is not a bad fracture and with around 10 days of rest everything will be okay so if everything goes well maybe I can ride the last event of the Internazionali d'Italia in Ottobiano, two weeks before the first round of the MXGP in Qatar.

Okay, so not the best start to my season but let's stop talking about the bad stuff and let's go on with the positives! I have two big news flashes for you this year.

At the beginning it was very difficult for me to find a team and a structure for riding when I was a kid. Coming from the deep south, in Sicily, nothing was easy and my family had to fight and struggle a lot to find the resources necessary for me to be able to ride in a team based in north Italy. Obviously, things came good for me and ever since I started to become successful I have always thought that one day I could help some young kid to find a good bike – and now that time is here!

We have made a new little structure with a sponsor – Celestini – that has always helped me in the past. With the collaboration of Athena and with many people helping us we are able to give Emilio Scuteri the chance to ride a good bike. Emilio is a 15-year-old who comes from Calabria which is close to Sicily and is the current 85cc Italian champion. This year he will ride a 125 in the Italian and European championship and he will have my nephew as a mechanic. It's a first step into the future for all of us and only time will tell how the ride goes!

The other piece of news I have is that in Qatar we will announce the 'Tony Cairoli Challenge', a videogame that will surprise you

all! It's simply fantastic, the producers have done a superb job and following a little advice from me here and there, together we have created a realistic game for your mobiles and tablets. I can't say any more at the moment but I will be really excited to hear your reactions when it's finally released.

Now it's time to go back to the physiotherapist for another session of work in order to start riding again ASAP. Luckily we have done all the development work on the bike and if last year I wasn't quite 100 per cent ready for the 450, now it's as if this bike is made for me. The team have worked like maniacs and it feels like a well tailored suit! The engine, suspension and chassis are perfect!

So, let's get the show started in the night of Losail and let's see what happens! With so many top riders able to fight for the title it's going to be awesome – let's get it on!

Ci sentiamo presto amici (talk soon my friends)!



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# BRYAN

# MACKENZIE

## WHAT IS THE BEST APPROACH TO TACKLING THE UK WINTER? GO SOMEWHERE ELSE OF COURSE!

**M**y cuz, Billy Mac, has got it right when he spends the summer at home in the UK and then moves back to Australia for our winter and their scorching summer. But if you're not an ex-international motorbiking superstar that was able to make another life in a different country arguably cooler than ours then this is how I, an avid all-year-round motorcyclist in Britain, would tee-up the winter.

Follow my advice and you'll smash it 350 yards down the fairway to leave yourself with a nice short iron through the summer to put you in a premium position for an easy putt at the end of the season. With a bit of luck...

Lean into the wind on jumps. There's nowt scarier than putting yourself six, 10, 20 feet in the air and getting caught up there like a yacht, stuffing a boner air as you hit auto-pause and stiffen up like a bout of morning glory while the wheels get blown from underneath you.

It's an automatic reaction after the initial hard-on to put out a leg to counterbalance the unanticipated bike movement and more times than not dab it upon landing, potentially blowing out the ligaments in your knee.

There are two approaches to tackling wind and jumps – the first one being pick your battles and bow out and keep your wheels on the ground if you're not comfortable up there. Work on endurance this day and pound out long, steady motos and save your fast laps for another day. High wind days are very few compared to an average day of shredding the gnar and better conditions for phat air will come again.

The second is to move the bike in the air on purpose. If you intend to move the bike in the air as you approach a jump then it won't be a surprise when you get a motocross BJ. It's only when you jump straight without anticipating movement and the wind hooks into you that you hit the panic button and fire limbs out the side of the bike to counteract the unanticipated bike movement.

So learn to lean into the wind as you climb the take-off ramp. Carve the take-off slightly in a very small arc to turn into the wind ever so slightly to encourage the path of the bike and drop the shoulder that is taking the brunt of

the wind right before flight. To correct it always point the front wheel back in the direction you want the bike to go (down the track presumably) while also moving your upper body with it and in the same direction. Intending to move the bike in the air takes the surprise out of it which is why it's the best way to tackle wind on jumps.

Rain is rain. It's wet and it's s\*\*te whether you're sat in the house, working on a roof or dancing in it... I can get through a day's riding in the rain though because I'm usually prepared for it. For me the worst part of the rain is after you're finished riding your moto. Wet, dirty and – when your core temp drops – cold. Pack enough kit – undershirt, socks, boxers – to change your kit in between sessions.

Rain is a motivation killer and when you're sat in the van, wet and cold, the thought of going back out compares to picking up dog s\*\*te in the garden – you'd rather pay someone else to do it – so you don't take much convincing to call it quits for the day. But if you can change your gear to get dry and keep your temperature up while you're sat in the van then you start from scratch again. Remember – dry kit is like packing motivation in your gearbag.

What's the worst thing about the cold? Cold hands. Actually, what's worse than cold hands? When they warm up and you'd thank someone to just whip them off at the wrist! There's loads of old theories out there that will keep your hands warm but I find some are a bit hit and miss.

The old rubber glove under your riding gloves trick is one. But it's a fail for me it is. The rubber gloves do in fact heat your hands up but they cause your hands to sweat pretty quickly. After a while your hands will wrinkle and soften and open you up to a bout of blisters. Not cool. Then there's the old skiing gloves number. This doesn't work either. Skiing gloves are double-lined so make your grips feel fat and abnormal. When you grip the bar the outside fabric (usually waterproof) finds traction on your steering rubber but the inner lining (often fleece material) moves around inside the waterproof lining, not giving you a true grip. This equals danger!

I find a neoprene, tight-fitting cycling glove

to be the best. It fits tight to your hand, is pretty thick and gives you a decent feel and grip. Add a set of handguards to deflect some wind and the job's a good 'un.

When it comes to training I'm a highly-motivated individual so can always get after it but as I get older it's less of a case of 'I can't be assed doing this outside' and more 'man, that's pretty dangerous'. So if there's snow on the road, a savage frost or one of the many storms with a name blowing through town I'll be dry-humping the WattBike in the gym.

Anything over an hour-and-a-half and I'm definitely outdoors though so I have all the gear for it. I have the balaclava, the helmet, a fleece snood for around my neck, some base layers underneath my bib cycling swag with a wind and waterproof cycling top, fleece-lined cycling gloves and neoprene overshoes (like wind/waterproof jackets for your shoes) to keep my toes warm. I also have my energy gels, my Rockstar water bottle and am lit up like one of those HGVs you see on the motorway with LED lights over the cab like a bad case of acne.

Okay, so I may look like a total bell but if you're prepared properly for it the motocrosser in you will love it!

Finally, get a girlfriend. Hanging out outside in your civvies in the abomination that has been the British winter this year just doesn't cut it. Besides, you should be tired from training and need the sleep. Nothing productive comes out of winter except excellent fitness (that's probably untrue in most people's cases) so I recommend you get a chick, get a Netflix account and chill – and for anyone born before the late '90s that translates into get a bird, get a pizza and watch a DVD. Or just get a girlfriend and make some magic happen.

That's how I survive the British winter while still gettin' it done.





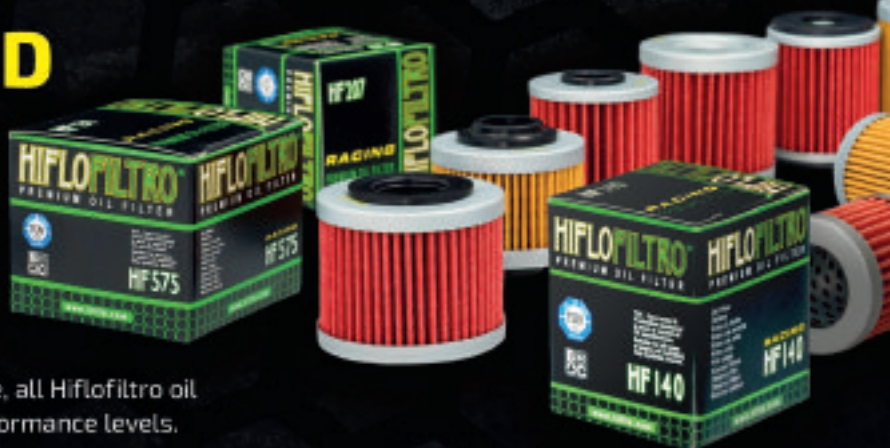
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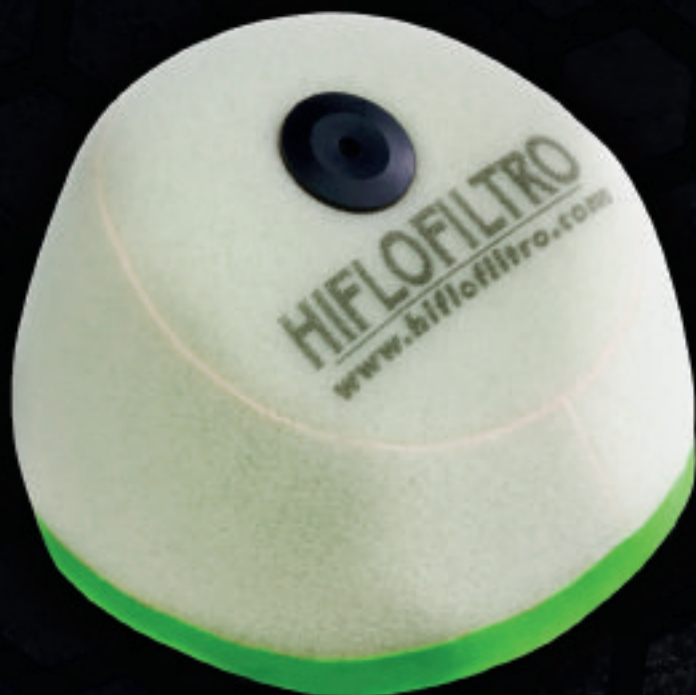


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# DANIEL

# GROVE



## OUR FACTORY ACE CONTEMPLATES THE YEAR AHEAD...

**T**he last year or so has been pretty crazy for me. I've got myself a decent real-life job, I've got this page to fill up every month, I've turned 30 and – as you'll have seen last month – I've got my hands on a brand new scrammy. So there's been a lot to take in over the last 12 months and what most people spread out over a few years or longer I've gone and done in record time.

I can't complain though and it's certainly been a big change of scenery at work and in the man cave but I'm getting used to it and dealing with it much better now...

I've given up sweets for 2016 and also plan on eating less meat which both seem to pale in comparison to everything else going on. This time last year though they'd have been a big deal!

So I've gone and sold my 250cc two-stroke. With this test rider gig it wouldn't be fair to leave Bahama Yamaha sat on a stand watching the RM-Z get played with on a weekly basis so it was only fair to cut her loose. It was for the best I think.

My original plan for 2016 was to carry on with the South West Premier MX series. However, back in the autumn it was announced that three tracks would be used twice which isn't really my cup of tea. Using one track twice would be okay if they were the first and last rounds but that's not the case and that had me lose a little interest in the series.

I've raced the series for four years straight and it's well organised and track prep is good – although the Vets may say otherwise as they were always first out on a watered track – and I am going to miss it. I'll still race a couple of rounds of it but take Landrake for example. I've raced there for the last four years straight and I also raced there in '06, '07, '08 and '09. In 2006

and every time I've ridden there since I've always used the same lines as the track never changes and to be blunt I can't be assed to race there twice in a season. And the start configuration and first few corners are ridiculous.

So that was that. I planned on racing the series again this year and then planned on asking/begging/pleading to get a test bike for 2017. However, two weeks after the calendar was announced for the South West series I was offered the Suzuki so that also helped make up my mind.

I then thought about racing the Vintage Bonanza series in the modern two-stroke class and then when the dates were announced it was three tracks over five rounds so that put me off that and I wouldn't have spent as much time riding the RM-Z anyway so it was back to the drawing board.

With the two-stroke gone it'll leave me plenty of time to get into the swing of racing a four-stroke and it wouldn't have been fair on me or the bikes to keep changing what I ride all the time. I've had odd rides in the past on four-strokes and borrowed one once to race but never really twisted the throttle on one (no change there some of you might say!) but now I can race the bike in anger without the fear of possibly owing a buddy some serious cash if their bike shat itself on me.

I'll keep the bike mechanically together and maintained as per the manual so touch wood it should be good for the season and you'll find out about the bike and how I'm getting on with it as the year goes.

For those with a good memory or who have been around motocross for a long time, 2016 for me will be a bit like Ricky Carmichael's final year racing back in 2007 – picking and choosing

races that I fancy on tracks that I like whether it's five minutes away or much further afield. Although I won't be racing any AMA Supercross tracks or Red Bud or Millville like RC did I will race as much as possible in selected races as to test a bike and products you have to race.

I've raced 10 years straight in various championships and I'm actually a little bit burnt out. It's not the actual racing – that's the best part – but I reckon that as a percentage of total time spent on motocross that only makes up about five per cent of it. The amount of time I've spent prepping the bike, fixing it, cleaning it, buying and fitting parts for it and travelling takes up far more time than I actually spend riding.

When you race in a championship and you need parts for the next race desperately you have no choice but to cough up to buy them and I won't miss the stress that comes with that. Then there's hitting up practice tracks this time of year and getting three sessions in the cold and wet because everyone is there as it's the only track open. This has worn me down a bit and as I've no race commitments I don't have to join in and paddle around this winter.

So from now on I'm a fair-weather rider and that doesn't bother me at all. I think I've paid my motocross dues travelling all over the country in the name of racing and chasing the best possible championship positions that I can. Even the South West series involves a lot of travelling so it's time to concentrate on enjoying my riding and making the most of this lucky position that I've found myself in...

*Daniel Grove*





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Jason Anderson takes the red plate into round two of the AMA SX series after winning Anaheim 1



## A SELECTION OF SWEET-ASS STORIES FROM ALL AROUND THE OFF-ROAD UNIVERSE.

As usual Anaheim kicked off the start of the AMA Monster Energy Supercross tour in early January and a surprise first-time winner emerged – Jason Anderson. Anderson, a past Lites champ, finished second at last year's opener as a rookie but was under the radar in the pre-race hype this time around. His win was the first of his career on a 450 in only his second year of big bikes and also marked the first 450 SX win for a Husqvarna in supercross history.

But you can't keep the champ down for long and Ryan Dungey has once again risen to the top of the talent pool. After a second place at the opener, the Dunge has won each Main Event since – three of the little suckers – and comfortably leads the points already a quarter of the way into the season.

Dungey is renowned for his consistency to help him win championships but this year he is consistently the best starter, consistently the best at staying out of trouble and now consistently the fastest guy. So the most

consistent guy is now consistently the fastest guy – that must suck for everybody else.

Dungey actually has an impressive SX podium streak going, too. To find the last time the champ didn't finish on the podium you'd have to go back to the opening round of 2015 where he finished fourth in the Main Event. That's 20 straight times. #BOSSLIFE

James Stewart's comeback to AMA SX went about as well as what's now unfortunately expected of him and ended with an early shower. The highly-anticipated return after the 16-month doping ban was derailed at round one in Anaheim after a collision with Dungey in the Main Event resulted in Stewart picking up a concussion. The after effects of this ruled him out of rounds two and three before trying his hand at Oakland.

Following a fast start Stewart dropped from third down the field before pulling out of the race, later revealing 'blurred vision' as the reason and has quit the series indefinitely until he feels 100 per cent healthy. Bubba has

failed to finish out the night at the last five race weekends he's started – Monster Cup, Bercy, Anaheim 1, San Diego and Oakland.

It wasn't the racing that made for one of the biggest stories of the season so far though, stealing the headlines from the opener was the Peick-Freise brawl. Both are notorious hard asses and after Freise took down Peick in both the heat and semi at Anaheim 1, Weston blew a gasket and rained punches down on Freise. As a result Peick was disqualified from rounds one and two and incurred a \$5k fine while Freise escaped with just a few dents in his helmet.

British interest lay firmly on the shoulders of ex-pat Dean Wilson. Since moving to the 450 class in 2015 Deano has struggled to flex his SX muscles as he did in the Lites and suffered an ACL knee injury in his rookie big-bike year which wrote off his season. After coming off the back of a solid ninth at San Diego, Wilson blew the same ACL out at Anaheim 2, grenading his second supercross season. It's a tough blow for the kid but he is expected back to inject a



*A knee injury for Dean Wilson  
has left the Scot sidelined  
for the foreseeable future*



*Cedric Soubeyras leads the  
Monster Energy Arenacross  
Tour into the final stretch*



British flavour outdoors.

Tom Thievery in the motocross industry is rife the world over at the minute. In America the factory-supported BTO Sports KTM team transporter (riders Davi Millsaps and Justin Brayton) was broken into in January and over half of the team's inventory was stolen estimated at \$140,000 worth of factory and non-factory parts. The team race bikes were luckily securely locked away allowing the pair to continue their season. It's believed that the culprits have been identified too from CCTV but are yet to be caught.

In the UK the Monster Energy Arenacross Tour has definitely been a Gallic invasion as Frenchies fill the top three spots more often than not. Champ in 2014, Fabien Izoird was doing the best job at smashing in consistent results and led the way through the halfway stage of the series. But catastrophe struck in Birmingham at round seven when during the Main Event a mid-pack crash broke his leg.

Cedric Soubeyras was set to take over the

championship lead after Izoird's demise but also DNF'd round seven as reigning champ Thomas Ramette took a double Main Event win in Birmingham and a huge step forward in his title defence. Soubeyras did bounce back the following weekend in Newcastle at rounds eight and nine and his double win earned him the red plate as series leader.

Josh Hansen has also vacated the series for unconfirmed reasons. Hanny hadn't quite done what was expected of him on the tour with just one win to his name which he picked up in Glasgow when he eventually had a drama-free Main Event to take the top spot. Up 'til that point, however, Hanny's campaign had been a lot like a Fail Army compilation as he wiped his way through the opening rounds and failed to make a heavy dent on the scoresheet. Then, mysteriously, hours before round six in Birmingham he announced on Twitter that he would be pulling out of the series claiming a fall out with the promoter – the full details of the circumstances haven't surfaced. And that was

the end of that...

AXUK promoter Matt Bates released a statement insisting that only Hansen knows the actual reason for him walking away from the series and took the high ground, wishing him well with whatever he chooses to do. But he did set the record straight on Twitter insisting it had nothing to do with money, contrary to a lot of online speculation.

Did anyone see the Birmingham streaker? You know you've made it as an event when you get a streaker run onto the main stage. I've no idea who it was but some modest matey ran a couple of lanes of the track, including the whoops, before being tackled to the ground by AX heavy Neil Hawker!

Sadly in Glasgow Aussie rider Daniel McCoy went down exiting the whoops during one of the heats which scarily left him without feeling in his legs. McCoy underwent spinal surgery to fix and stabilise his spine and posted this update on Instagram shortly afterwards...

'T11 and T12 relocated with screws and >>



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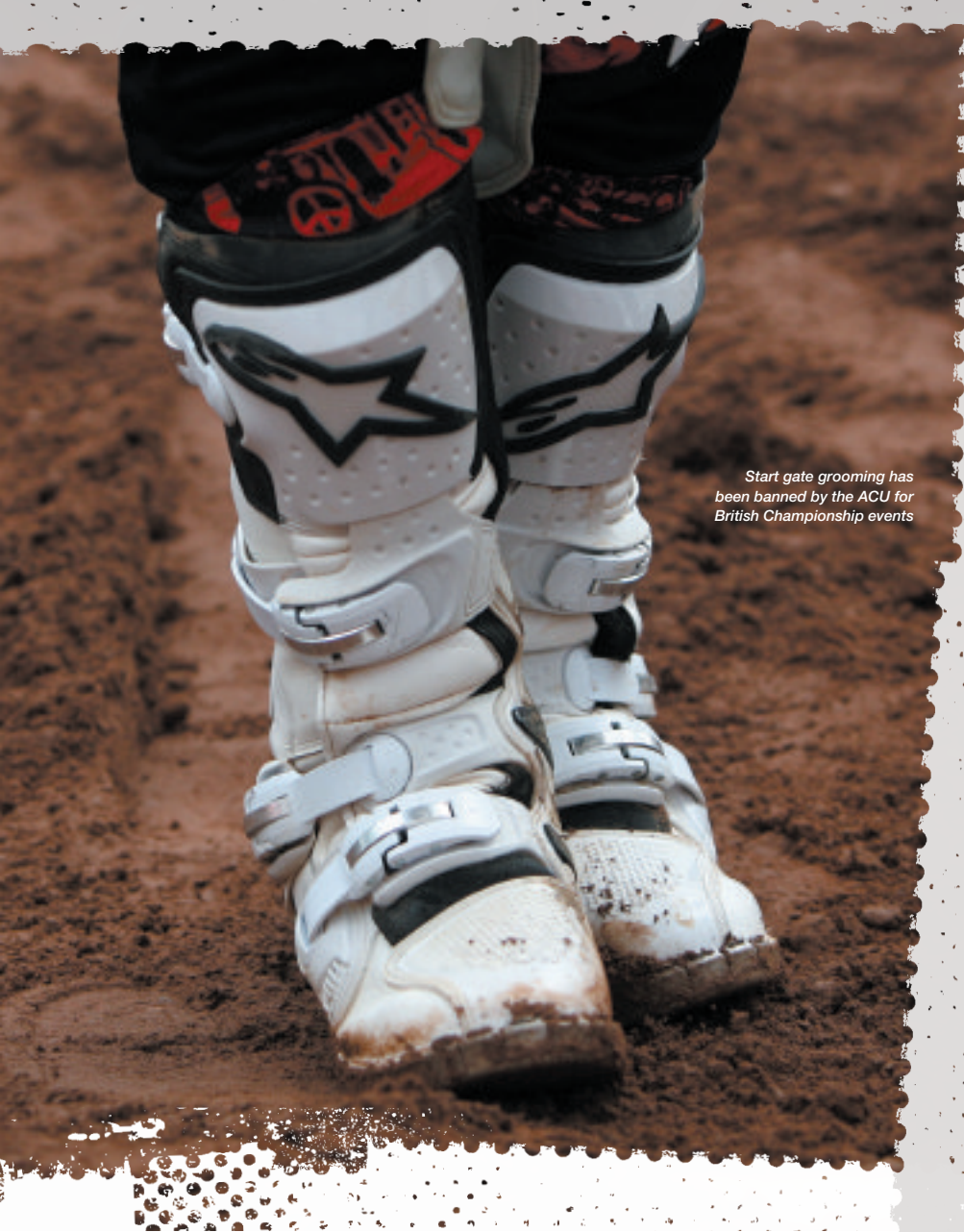


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Start gate grooming has been banned by the ACU for British Championship events

rods, some bone grafting done as well. Have some feeling in my left leg and have been told I'm incomplete so there's hope for more feeling as time goes on. I'm so grateful and overwhelmed with the support from everyone.'

A fund was set up to help fund medical bills and air ambulance transport back to his native Australia – you can donate by going to [www.gofundme.com/y8jequx9](http://www.gofundme.com/y8jequx9).

The Maxxis British championship is heading north of the border once again for the first time since 2011. After a failed attempt to host one in Scotland in 2015, RHL has stepped up as a worthy promoter and secured the Leuchars venue, near St Andrews. With the input of RHL, who successfully run the British Youth championship and the Weston Beach race, there won't be any last-minute bail-outs this time around so we should definitely look forward to adding 'Scotland' to the hosting nations of the 'British' championship.

A new ruling was added to the rulebook for the '16 British championship, too. As of this year a rider is NOT permitted to 'groom their place on the start pad' so no gate prepping. Also noted (but pretty much covered by the point above) was... 'Concrete start pads – this must remain free from soil/sand at all times' disallowing any pads being built on top of the concrete for better traction.

There's a strong British contingent contesting the three-round Italian MX

championship as a pre-season shakedown ahead of this year's domestic and world campaigns. Graeme Irwin, Lewis Trickett and Martin Barr (Buildbase Honda) plus Alex Snow and Alfie Smith (JK Yamaha) are using the series as a warm up.

Not alone in using the Italian championship as a 2016 starting point, a whole host of grand prix riders contest the series, too. Reigning world MXGP champ Romain Febvre continued where he left off last season as THE MAN. Sharing wins with an equally impressive Evgeny Bobryshev, Febvre was just that little bit stronger coming from behind and proved that last season was no fluke. The pairing showed their early-season speed and intentions by posting times in the last race three seconds quicker than anyone else.

MX2 world champ Tim Gajser also showed well aboard his factory-supported Honda 450 and led a portion of race one before a bike problem dropped him down the field but he demonstrated he has the pace and control of his new 450 ride to be a threat in the higher placings of this year's MXGP series.

Tony Cairoli was initially on the starting list for the opening round but a practice crash a fortnight before resulted in a couple of broken ribs that forced him to sit it out. It was supposed to be the first time a healthy TC would have gone up against a confident Febvre since the Frenchman's rise to power last year as Cairoli battled injury >>



## WIENERCROSS! WHEN SAUSAGE DOGS DO SX...

Just when you thought you'd seen it all Wienerschnitzel – the official Hot Dog of Joe Gibbs Racing – has been running races for sausage dogs at all rounds of the AMA Supercross series. The Wienercross has apparently proven popular with SX race fans as some of the leading canine athletes from the Wiener Nationals – which celebrated its 20th running in 2015 – take to the track during the intermission. Don't expect to see something similar during the lunch break of the Maxxis series this summer...



## BLUE BOYS! YAMAHA'S 2016 EWC TEAM ANNOUNCED

Yamaha have upped the ante for the 2016 Enduro World Championship by fielding both an Enduro 1 and Enduro 2 team. After a successful 2015 back in enduro with their WR250F, they'll also test their mettle with the all-new WR450F for the coming season.

The Miglio Yamaha Official Enduro 1 Team will take shape with Mikael Persson and Jamie McCanney as riders, respectively 2015 Enduro Junior World Champion and Enduro Youth Cup Champion.

Last year's Enduro 1 rider Cristobal Guerrero moves up to the Enduro 2 class alongside Loic Larrieu to be a part of the newly-established Outsiders Yamaha Official Enduro2 Team.



## ALES ALES JONNY WALKER WINS IN FRANCE

Jonny Walker notched up his first major extreme enduro victory of 2016 at the Ales Trem in France. Successfully defending his crown, Walker secured the win by over seven minutes from Sherco's new signing Wade Young.

Winning the Saturday night endurocross-style Prologue, Walker faced an early challenge from Young during the first two laps of Sunday's Main Event. Kicking things up a gear, Walker broke free as the difficulty level increased to hammer his way across the finish as the clear winner.

With Young second, Graham Jarvis (Husqvarna) fought his way forward from a poor start to take third overall.





*Toby Price picks up his first Dakar Rally win*

and eventually retired from the season just as Febvre found his funk. I guess we'll have to wait...

Back behind the start gate once again, Jeffrey Herlings showed up at the Italian championship and completely dominated MX2 showing he hasn't lost anything during the past two years of injury. He obliterated the field by over a minute, lapping talented riders such as Conrad Mewse and Thomas Covington who both debuted their new Rockstar Husqvarna rides.

Did you hear about that freaky fast chick racer from New Zealand? Well you will... Courtney Duncan is a young female ripper who races for Josh Coppins' Yamaha New Zealand race team and raced the MX2 class recently in NZ's biggest International motocross race, the

Woodville MX GP. Miss Duncan won the MX2 class on the day.

Just to put you in the picture of how fast she is she beat Factory KTM Junior team rider Josiah Natzke who was winning EMX125 races last season and had lap times which would put her in the top five of MX1 beside Dean Ferris, Cody Cooper and DBR's own Jake Nicholls. I think she's contending the WMX GP championship this year.

The New Year is hardly one month old but it's already in full swing. With no rest for the enduro/rally crew, January saw both the SuperEnduro and Dakar Rally riders hit the track full gas on January 2.

Dominating the headlines for the majority of January was Dakar. For the first time in more years than we can count on both hands – we

had to resort to using our feet – there was going to be a new winner of the rally. With Marc Coma and Cyril Despres exiting stage left, the door was wide open for someone new to take over.

The list of favourites was a long one. HRC Honda were looking good with both Paulo Gonçalves and Joan Barreda at the helm. On paper KTM looked a little more vulnerable. Despite just one Dakar finish to his credit – albeit a podium result at that – Toby Price was quick to take the team's lead.

With stage one cancelled due to a torrential downpour, Price won stage two. Honda fought back and soon took control of the lead with Barreda. But before the first week was over his bike went bang and his rally was done.

Goncalves took control but crashes and then a broken radiator ensured he couldn't do right





The SuperEnduro series has been sensational for American ace Cody Webb

for doing wrong. Meanwhile, Price – happy to survive week one unscathed – began to show his hand and stepped things up a notch. Bagging a few more stage wins, he hit the front and never looked back.

For a guy that's been through the rigours of the sport – only two years ago he lay on his back in a hospital bed with a broken neck – there wasn't one soul who wasn't pumped for the Aussie. Proof that nothing is ever impossible, Price made all the blood, sweat, tears and broken bones throughout his 28 years worth it for that moment of glory on the podium in Rosario. Congrats Pricey!

In SuperEnduro circles the current season is proving anything but clear cut. After two rounds Cody Webb is the championship leader with two overall wins but he's only holding a two-

point lead over Jonny Walker. With at least six guys capable of winning any given race, Webb, Walker, Colton Haaker, Taddy Blazusiak, Taylor Robert and Alfredo Gomez have been keeping the crowds on their feet.

Walker – a little frustrated with Webb beating him to the top step in Poland and Germany – got his first race win of 2016 on the board in Germany and will be raring to go when the series resumes at the end of February in Argentina.

Haaker is another man with a point to prove. Easily one of the most exciting riders, he's also a little more crash-prone than most. Hitting the dirt too often in Germany robbed him of a potential overall win but he did secure his first podium so we're expecting him to come out swinging again in Argentina.

In the Junior ranks Manuel Lettenbichler has the edge with six race wins from six starts but there's a British pack that's chomping at the bit too. You can read all about those guys flying the British flag indoors in this issue of DBR so flick forward and check that out now.

And finally, David Knight claimed a confident victory at the opening round of the combined British Extreme Enduro Championship and European series at Tong.

Ensuring his Tong win-streak remained intact, Knight ruled supreme to ease his way to the win. Behind him the fight for the final podium steps was on. In the end it was Jonathan Richardson (KTM) who grabbed second from Beta's Ben Hemingway.

In his first extreme outing, trials ex-pat Billy Bolt took fourth.

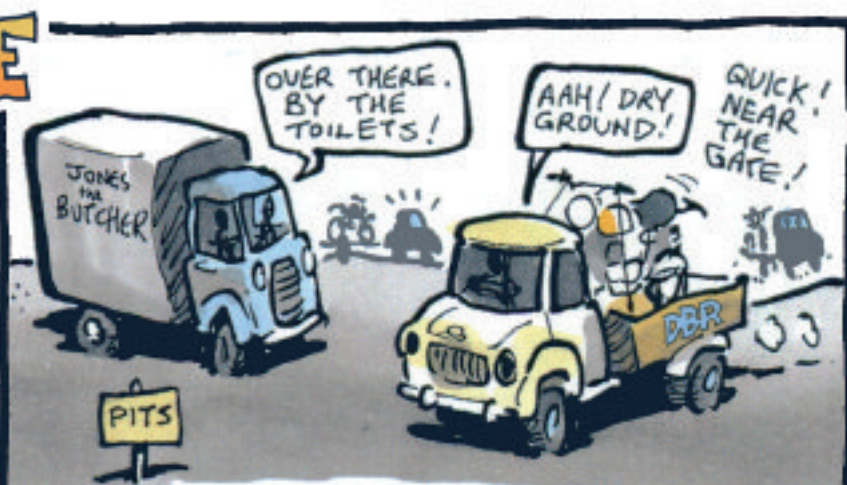




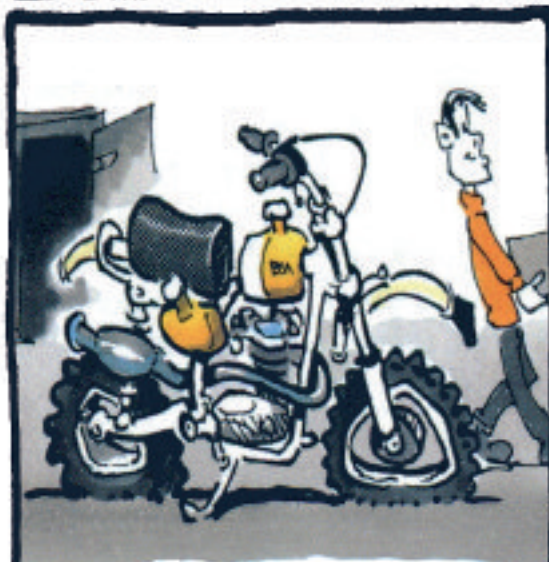
# 11 SCRAMBLE



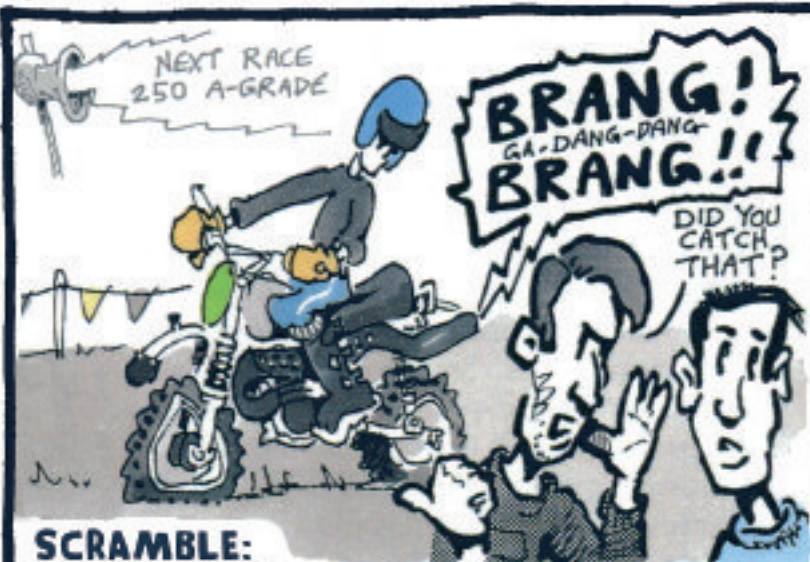
**SCRAMBLE** /'skraembel/  
v. & n.  
1 tr. cook (eggs) by heating  
when broken and well mixed.



**SCRAMBLE FOR:**  
2 intr. (foll. by for, at) struggle with competitors  
(for a thing or a share of it).



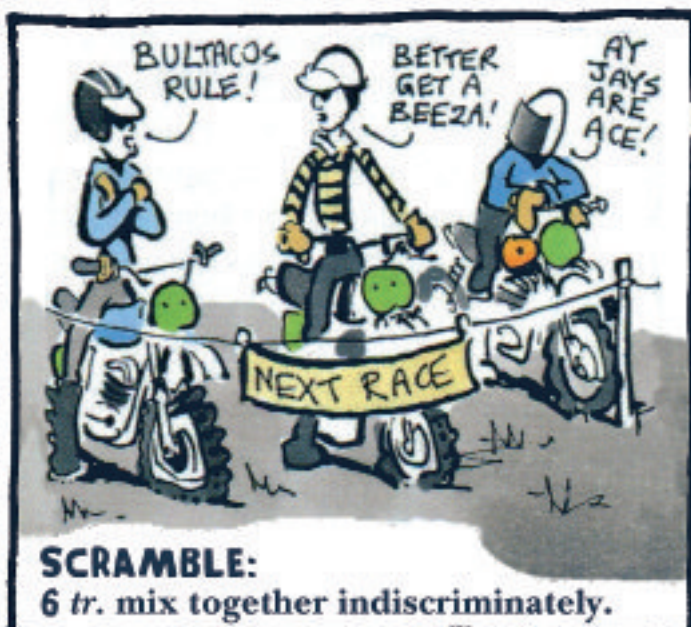
**SCRAMBLER:** /'skraembla/  
3 n. a device for scrambling



**SCRAMBLE:**  
4 tr. change the speech frequency of  
(a broadcast transmission or telephone  
conversation) so as to make it unintelligible.

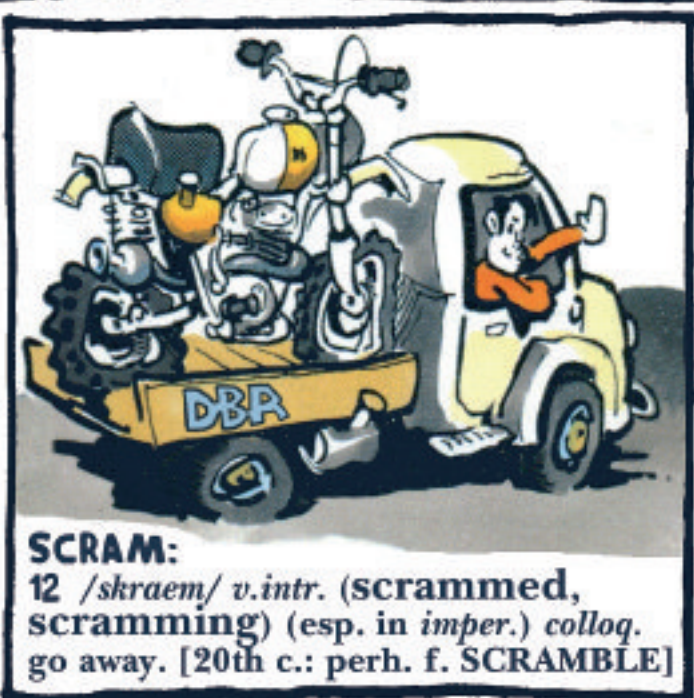
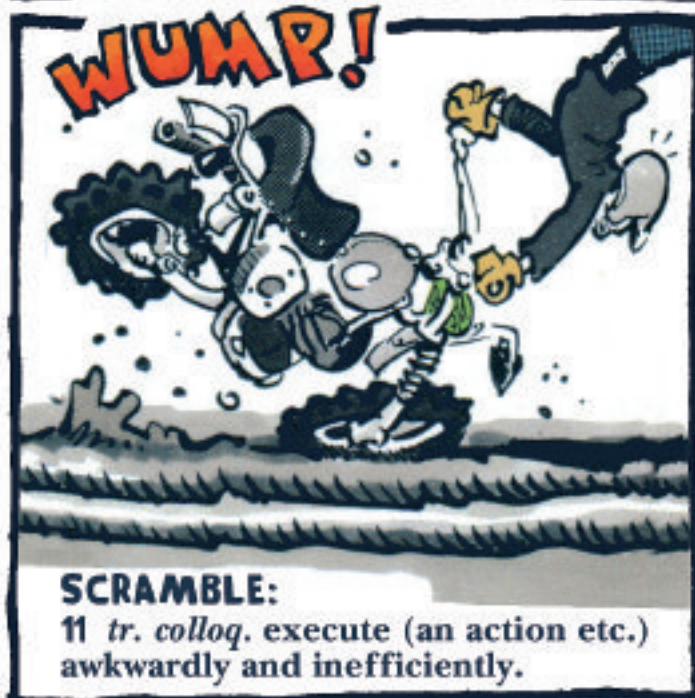
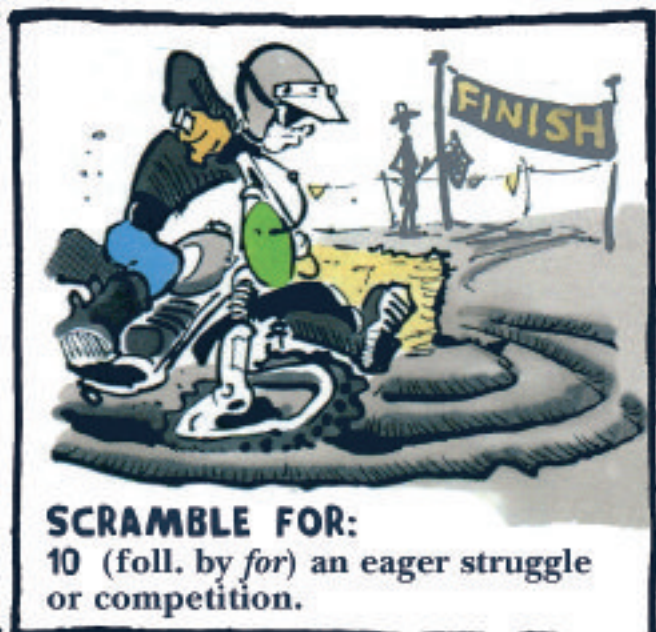
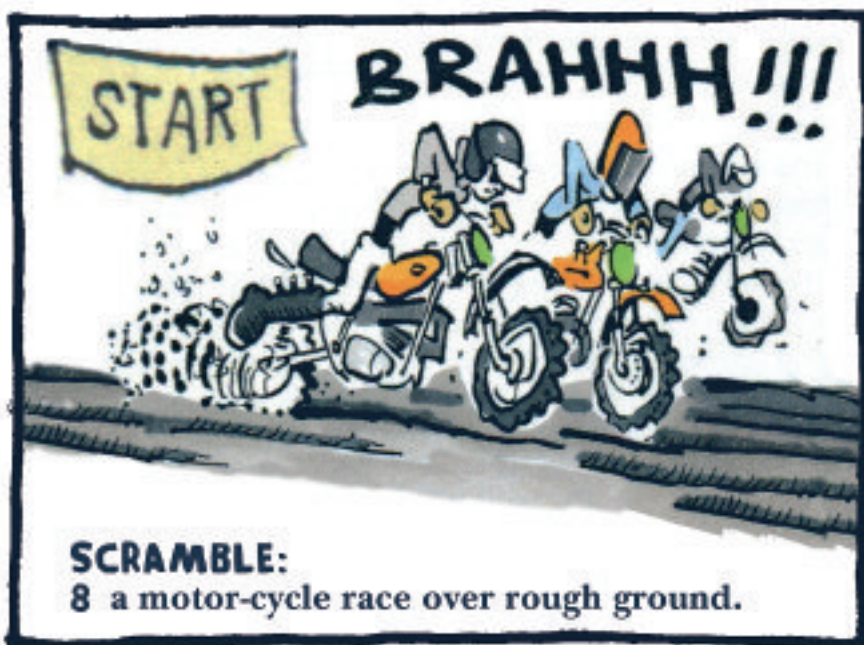
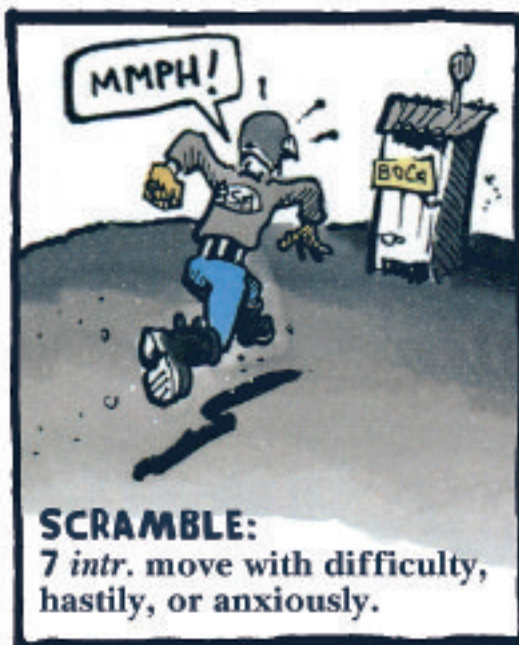


**SCRAMBLE:**  
5 intr. (of fighter aircraft or  
their pilots) take off quickly in  
an emergency or for action.



**SCRAMBLE:**  
6 tr. mix together indiscriminately.









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# STERRY BOMB!



One of Britain's brightest racing talents, Adam Sterry exploded onto the GP scene last year in Argentina and is all set for a dynamite full debut world championship season in 2016...

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Nuno Laranjeira





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If I was a betting man and had to put money on which British rider has the best chance of winning a world MX title this year then I'd splash my cash on Max Anstie.

But what about 2017 or 2018 or even 2019? Motocross is an unpredictable sport – one crash or one bad decision can change the course of a career and looking too far into the future is never advisable.

Having said that it's also important to have a solid game plan and Adam Sterry's coach, manager and mentor Richard-Mike Jones of the RMJ Academy has complete faith in the Wilvo Virus Performance KTM rider.

"The goal has always been to make him world champion and nothing's changed," says

Rich-Mike. "I believe he can and will. Beyond that the new goal will be to try and do it again. That's how it's always been and how it is now and what we're going for."

At 19 Adam still has four years to win a world title in MX2 before he ages out and, having coached him since he was six, Rich-Mike is well placed to make such a prediction – but it's still a brave statement regarding a rider who won't start his first full world championship season until the MXGP of Qatar on February 27.

As far as his 2016 campaign is concerned the Chester-based rider is playing it cool.

"I haven't really set any goals," says Adam from his training camp in Spain. "I just want to race each weekend and have the speed to be up there and hopefully progress through the

year and see where that takes me.

"I definitely want to be in the top 10 and towards the end of the year I want to be pushing for some podiums. Hopefully I can do that and I'm confident with my speed at the moment and the improvements we've made compared to my speed last year. I just think I lacked a bit of experience and I think this year I can get it done."

Last season threw a steep learning curve Adam's way but that's nothing new to a rider who made his EMX2 debut at just 14 and by 15 was racing full-time in the MX2 class of the Maxxis ACU British Motocross Championship.

For the purposes of this interview I wanted to concentrate on Adam's 2015 season and how he's feeling heading into 2016 but there's no



harm in chucking in a bit of background.

"My dad didn't do motocross or even have a bike and he wanted me to get into go-karting," he says. "He bought me a quad and I just used to go round and round in the garden and it started from there really.

"I then got a bike, did a few local races, got with Rich and went from there."

Success came quickly and in 2005 he won the Harglo British 50cc championship, following it the next year with the British Masters and world 65cc titles.

"I didn't really do anything on a small-wheel because my dad was selling his business so I missed a few years. Instead of racing I concentrated on coaching with Rich.

"I went into the big-wheels on a Honda 150 and was third in the European championship on that in 2010. I was also BYMX champion and British Masters champion. I then went onto a 250 and finished second in the MXY2 and the BYMX."

In 2012 he turned pro and signed for PAR Honda on a 250, finishing 14th in the Maxxis >>

*Pre-season training has gone well and Adam's feeling – and looking – ready to race...*



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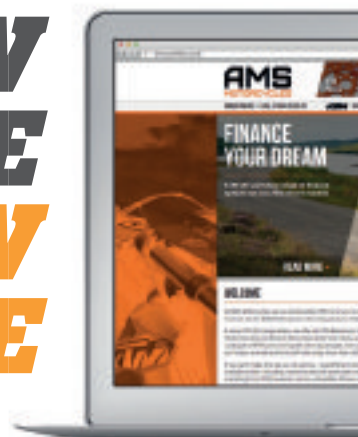


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tread water with another bronze medal in both the Maxxis and Euro championships. For someone so young, so determined and – without a doubt – so improved it must have been a bitter pill to swallow...

"It was definitely frustrating for me at times last season. I know on paper it looks as though I haven't improved but I've actually learned a lot and gained more experience. I'm another year older. My speed's definitely improved and everything's got a lot better."

"I felt at the start of the season I came out swinging and was close to the front in the British and was battling for the title at the start. Then I had a disaster round at Canada Heights and got taken down at the start in two races and then DNF'd the last race."

"I knew the British championship was going to be tough with Max but I would have liked to think after Lyng where I gave him a good run for his money that I could have carried that on through the year."

In the end, despite finishing on the podium at four out of the eight rounds, he didn't have an answer for Max – who, remember, was winning GPs in 2015 – or eventual champion Steven Lenoir.

Looking at the EMX250 series standings it's clear that two rounds – Germany and Latvia – cost him the title where a couple of no-scores eventually left him 30 points behind champion >>

MX2 class with his best race result a fourth in the final round at Little Silver.

"After that I signed with Steve Turner on a KTM and I'm just going into my fourth year with him."

The 2013 season was one of rapid progression and he leapt to seventh in the Maxxis standings, claiming his debut race podium finish at Farleigh Castle.

In 2014 he claimed his first Maxxis race win and first overall podium finish to end the season third, a position he matched in the EMX250 class.

Despite a strong start, last season was the first in his short career that he failed to progress up the leaderboard. Instead he appeared to



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In Junior World Championship action on a Big Wheel 85



Adam prepares a gate ahead of his maiden Maxxis moto at FatCat



Nick Kouwenberg. He did take the overall decisions in Holland and Great Britain but the final points table shows too many low scores.

"I took the red plate multiple times in the Europeans and had the speed to be battling for the lead every weekend but I just lacked the consistency, whether it be me one week making a mistake and having a big crash and the next week a little problem with the bike.

"I just had a few setbacks which was really frustrating actually because last year I really felt that I could win the European championship.

"Germany was my mistake. I took the lead, went over the finish jump, landed a bit off the side of the track, high-sided and jumped over the berm. I ended up in a load of metal mesh fencing that got stuck around the back wheel. I couldn't get it out so that was the end of the race.

"In Latvia I crashed on the start. It was a mud race and really one-lined. I got back through to something like 17th or 18th and then stalled it on the last lap and ended up out of the points. We also had a problem in Spain earlier on in the year in the first race which was a bit of a drama

when I had a slight bike problem."

It was always planned that Adam would make his GP debut in 2015 but it came earlier than expected at round three of the series in Argentina in late March. With his team-mate Jake Nicholls sidelined by injury – and Nicholls' 350 already on its way to South America – it was a great opportunity with just Adam's suspension and motor needing to be flown out.

It's fair to say Adam rose to the occasion...

"I holeshot the qualifying race but went down in the second corner and I was second out of the start in the first GP race. Seewer had got the holeshot and in the second corner I passed him for the lead and led for two corners.

"It felt really good at the time – my heart rate rocketed. If I had to pick a highlight from the year then it was definitely Argentina."

Although 2016 will be Adam's first full season in GPs he managed to get plenty of experience of racing at the highest level over the course of last year. There were further MX2 outings in Czech, Italy and France with a 10th in race one at Lombardia at the end of August his best moto finish to date.



*Sterry gets his scrub on in Spain*

# ADAM ON...>>>>>



He then ended the series racing the MXGP class in Mexico and the USA – scoring a pair of 12th-placed finishes at Leon and picking up points in the second moto at Glen Helen – but as well as the good times he also sampled the downside of GPs.

“I crashed in France and hurt my hand so that was a waste of time. The pace at a grand prix is a lot, lot different to the pace at a British championship round. The first few guys at the front have good pace in the British but after that it tails off quite fast.

“When you race with the faster people it definitely brings you on and when you go from racing GPs to the British it’s a step down. Racing the faster riders you’ve got to up your speed and get out of your comfort zone to keep up with them.

“When you come back to a British I’m not going to say it’s easy but at the grands prix you know you’ve got to be 100 per cent. If you crash on the start it takes a lot of work just to get back to the points but in the British it’s a lot easier although I don’t want to say it is easy because it’s not.”

With Anstie giving this year’s Maxxis a swerve and Lenoir moving up to MX2, the two riders who came between Adam and the 2015 title won’t figure in the equation. Of course, this doesn’t mean the championship is a foregone conclusion.

“There’s Dixon’s new signing Vsevolod Brylyakov who will be good and Ben Watson – I think they will be the main opposition. We’ll all be doing grands prix so we’re all on the same schedule and there won’t be any advantage or disadvantage.”

Adam’s a vital part of the ongoing PhD programme at Liverpool John Moores University so should be super-sharp for the start of the season and this – combined with a 2016 machine he’s already got dialled in – means his confidence is running high.

“I think with consistency and with the programme and everything we’ve got going through the winter I’m much fitter and much stronger.

“We’ve made massive improvements on the new ’16 bike and my weaknesses have sort of gone out the window with what I had with the ’15. The ’15 was quite difficult for me to try to get the bike to turn but the ’16 is a lot easier to turn – I’m loving the bike.

“I think with those combinations I can’t see why I can’t be British champion.”



## The future

“Hopefully I’ll be world champion one day. People also ask me if I’d like to go to the States but at the moment it’s not something that interests me but I haven’t had a deal or offer to go there so I’ve never been in a position to go.

“I think one day, after a few more years in Europe, if I got the right offer to go to America I’d definitely try it for one year and see what happens.”

## His 2016 team-mate

“I know Shaun [Simpson] quite well and I speak to him quite a lot. He has his own programme

and I have my own programme but I have Rich at the grands prix to discuss things with.

“We might talk about some line choices if we’re on the track at the same time and he’s got that experience but on race day I’ve got my own programme.

## Sand versus hardpack

“I prefer softer surfaces so I’m looking forward to the sand races and I’m looking forward to Argentina again. And my home GP at Matterley Basin – that’s always one of my favourites.”

## Education

“I always wanted to do motocross but I stayed

on through school and didn’t really have that much time off from school. So I finished all my GCSEs [he got three A’s, two As, three Bs and a bunch of Cs] and then worked for my dad for a little bit before I went full-time with motocross.”

## MX role models

“I wouldn’t say I looked up to anyone in particular as my favourite rider. Obviously when I was little Tommy Searle was doing well and then there was Dean Wilson and James Stewart but I didn’t particularly focus on one. I did spend a lot of time visiting Rich in hospital though...”





Adam leaves the line  
in an EMX250 moto



Adam got a little patriotic  
for the British GP





Battling it out with former team-mate Matiss Karro



Rich-Mike and Adam are often inseparable



## THE MENTOR Rich-Mike on Adam

Rich-Mike Jones retired from racing in 2007 but he was already coaching Adam by then and it's clear after 13 years together the pair share a close bond.

"Initially, because I had my own track at home, he first came to me when he was six," says Rich-Mike. "He got a 65 shortly after but he carried on racing on an auto while training on the 65. Once a week he came to me.

"I was coaching as a sideline to racing and five years ago I went coaching full-time and Adam and his dad stepped up what they were putting in and it's kinda kept growing.

"About the third time he came his dad had to pop off somewhere and he wouldn't ride until his dad got back, he was just crying his eyes out.

"When he took the lead in the GP [of Argentina] I actually was quite calm. The day before in the qualifying race he crashed after holeshotting and came through the pack and every time he was behind someone in that [second] corner and they went wide he'd pass them up the inside.

"So I'd seen him come out the first turn and go up the inside and then they went out of sight and I knew he was going to lead. And then he came over the jump in front. It was amazing, amazing."



2016 Monster Energy/AMA Supercross Series

# ➤ SAME AS IT







# EVER WAS!

HOW THE 2016 MONSTER ENERGY/  
AMA SUPERCROSS SERIES IS  
HOLDING TRUE TO TRADITION...

Words and photos by **Steve Cox**

**I**f you stick around long enough you'll notice a pattern in just about everything. The AMA Supercross Series is not immune from this phenomenon. Yes, it's a racing series and yes there is usually some element of chaos but somehow a pattern still emerges. And in many ways it's the same pattern as it's always been.

Here's what you need to know about the 2016 SX series so far...



## OPTIMISM VERSUS REALITY ◀

It all starts at the massive yearly Anaheim 1 pre-race, pre-season press conference. There's always a mix of top racers and most of them have made some sort of changes during the off-season. And the rhetoric is always the same whether there are four of them or 13 of them (as there were this year).

"The bike is awesome, the team is awesome, I feel great, I've done all my work, I'm completely healthy..." And if it's a racer who's on a new team or is on a team with an all-new motorcycle, you can usually throw in, "We are two seconds per lap faster on this bike..."

But somehow once the gate drops at round one, most of the time many of these same racers have some extenuating circumstance to explain why they finished 40 seconds behind the winner.

The thing about reality is that it doesn't care about your plans.



## ANAHEIM 1 = WEIRD ◀

Despite all of the bloviating at the pre-season press conference, there's another factor at play early in the SX season – Anaheim 1 often features an unusual winner. Here are a few examples...

In 2014, 450cc rookie Ken Roczen won the opening round at Anaheim and it looked almost easy. It had pundits reeling. Eventual champion Ryan Villopoto finished off the podium and then Roczen didn't win another race until halfway through the series. And that was it for him in terms of winning. He finished the season with two wins, third in points.

In 2015, Roczen won the opener again, then followed it with a second place in Phoenix and another win at Anaheim 2... Then only managed two more podium finishes in the next six races (along with two finishes outside the top 10) and then dropped out of the championship altogether.

Or what about in 2009, when Josh Grant – another 450cc rookie – took down Anaheim 1? He never won another 450cc main event after that.

You can go back much farther than this to see this pattern repeat, too. In 1998, Sebastien Tortelli won the season-opening Los Angeles Supercross when he wasn't even contracted to race in the USA yet. He never won another supercross. In 1990, 250cc rookie Damon Bradshaw won the Anaheim opener then dropped out of the series with an injured ankle only a couple weeks later.

And sometimes the weird factor isn't who wins but who doesn't. A great example of this is the 2002 Anaheim 1 event, where Ricky Carmichael famously looped out and took a major digger in the main event while David Vuillemin ended up winning the race. Carmichael won that championship. The following year in 2003, Reed won the race, while Carmichael crashed twice. Carmichael won that title, too. Or what about the 2013 championship where defending champ Ryan Villopoto crashed big in the main event and finished 16th, while Davi

Millsaps won the race. Villopoto won that championship.

In 2016, that weird result was the very first 450cc victory for Husqvarna's Jason Anderson. It was also Husky's first premier-class win in the modern era.

Ryan Dungey managed second place despite being taken out early in the main event by Trey Canard. And all of this was prefaced by a red-flag restart because of an opening-lap collision between Dungey and James Stewart, which rendered Stewart unconscious (an injury from which he still hasn't fully recovered after four rounds have been run).

Dungey has won all three main events since the opener, and Anderson hasn't (officially) visited the podium again in the three subsequent races.

The lesson here is that for Anaheim 1 you need to be prepared for weird results that aren't reflective of how the championship is going to go.

## DOMINATION ◀

Here's another supercross trait that seems to be holding true again in 2016. The championship winner often wins the most races on the season by a long shot. This wasn't the case prior to the Jeremy McGrath era but it has held true more often than not since then. All but one of Carmichael's championships went this way and all of Villopoto's did as well. Last year, Ryan Dungey caught fire late in the series and won eight races despite not winning his first race until round five.





*James Stewart and Eli Tomac have both had a slow start to the season*

## STEWART ◀

A lot has been said about James Stewart over the years. Everyone seems to have an opinion about him. He might be the most polarizing racer in the history of the sport, actually, and it would be foolish to believe it has nothing to do with his ethnicity. That being said, it's hard to determine if it's a matter of luck or something else. The problems Stewart is having so far in 2016 are definitely rooted in bad luck, though.

To start with, we have to return to the penalty he received for not disclosing his use of Adderall for his ADHD in 2014, which led to his suspension for the entire 2015 season. He was chomping at the bit to get back on the track late in 2015, went out and won the Red Bull Straight Rhythm for the second year in a row, and then signed himself up for a couple of off-season races in Europe and Australia.

However, an injury during that time period put those off-season races in jeopardy, and that led to him announcing he wasn't going

to go to Australia, which led to an internet backlash against him, which led to him reconfirming he would race in Australia, and on and on. In the end, instead of concentrating on getting prepared for Anaheim 1, he was all over the place, and he came into Anaheim noticeably heavier than he's ever been before.

However, it was evident right away at Anaheim 1 that Stewart was fast enough. He was third fastest in qualifying, less than 1/10th of a second slower than fast qualifier Trey Canard.

When the main event rolled around, Stewart got a good start, and as he attempted to pass Jason Anderson for third place, he dived low through a corner and was T-boned by Ryan Dungey, who obviously didn't know Stewart was going to cut down out of the corner that hard. Dungey didn't even go down and the only damage to his motorcycle was that his front-brake lever was moved a little bit. But Stewart went down hard and was knocked out.

He tried to race the following week in San Diego but he felt things were coming at him too quickly so he dropped out of the event then sat out round three in Anaheim altogether. He returned in Oakland and showed signs of his old self but was still noticeably ragged on the motorcycle – casing and overjumping obstacles, slowing too early down the start straightaway, and things like that. He dropped out of the main event after a few laps when he went backward rather than forward through the field.

After the race, he indicated that his head still isn't right and that he felt that things were coming at him too quickly.

With the number of head injuries he's had over the years, it's hard to say when, or even if, he will be the same James Stewart we've come to know over the years, but it's true that his attempt at a story-book return to championship competition is over. He will not win the 2016 Monster Energy/AMA Supercross Championship.





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Four rounds in and Trey Canard is already out of the 2016 title hunt

## CANARD ◀

Trey Canard is another very popular, very fast, but snake-bitten racer. As of the last Monster Energy Cup, Canard was the downright fastest guy on the track throughout the weekend. At the Anaheim 1 opener, he was the fastest qualifier as well and went on to win his heat race, qualifying first for the opening 450cc main event of the season.

In the main, he was fast early, working his way from fifth in the early laps up into second place behind his teammate Cole Seely, but then started going backward around the halfway point, losing second to eventual winner Jason Anderson, then falling and finishing seventh.

He repeated the seventh-place performance at round two, under different circumstances but then got caught up with another racer off the start of his heat race at round three, with that other racer landing on Canard's right hand while it was still on the handlebar. The collision smashed his hand, and he thought it was broken, but X-rays showed that it wasn't and he went on to race the Semi and go to the main, only to get bumped off the track by Justin Brayton and get hung up in the scaffolding next to the finish-line jump. (He had a similar crash under similar circumstances at the last Monster Energy Cup.)

He tried to race round four in Oakland, but his hand swelled up after practice, so he sat it out. Despite being entirely confident prior to the start of the series, Canard is now out of the championship hunt no matter what happens from here on out.

## SUSPENSION WARS ◀

There's a story underneath the surface on the technical side throughout the pits this year, and that's the story of KYB vs Showa. Ever since the Showa SFF Air forks came out, racers have struggled getting them set up properly. The first racer to make a big deal about not getting them to work correctly for him was Chad Reed, who up to that point was pumped about having access to factory Honda equipment. He reported that the Showa units lacked front-end feel, so he wouldn't be able to corner confidently.

Then, in late 2014, Trey Canard had been experiencing similar problems on his Showa SFF Air forks, lacking feel as well as causing headshake at seemingly random times. So, he switched the KYB and immediately began winning – after switching to KYB, he won four of the final six AMA 450cc National MX motos of the year as well as two out of the three main events at the Monster Energy Cup. This opened the flood gates.

In 2015, Eli Tomac was sporting the KYB suspension, and Canard's teammate Cole Seely switched the KYB during that year's AMA Nationals.

By 2016, the KYB suspension is the stuff to have. Ken Roczen is running KYB on his Suzuki while his teammate runs the Showa stuff. Eli Tomac is running the KYB on his Kawasaki while his teammate runs Showa. Both factory Hondas are running KYB, as well as all of the Yamahas.

In terms of results, though, which suspension is proving the best in the 450cc class?

WP has won all of the main events. So what were we talking about again?

French SX champ Thomas Do presses eject at Anaheim 1





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## WEIMER ◀

Jake Weimer is known for his supercross abilities but being the team-mate of one of the greatest champions in supercross history can actually do a lot to damage your own prospects.

Weimer is a very skilled racer. He gave Ryan Dungey everything he could handle in the 2009 250cc Western Regional Supercross Championship, and then dominated the 2010 championship before moving up to the 450cc class with Monster Energy Kawasaki as a team-mate to Ryan Villopoto.

However, he was overshadowed at Kawasaki, both by the fans and eventually (reportedly) the team itself. With Weimer's riding style being so different from his now-legendary teammate, Weimer needed special testing time and parts to get his machine working for him, and at least late in his four-year tenure with the Kawasaki factory team, he lacked the support. The prevailing attitude seemed to be that if it worked for Villopoto, it should work for Weimer, but that's unrealistic at best.

Over the years, Weimer's confidence waned, and he lost his ride. Last year, he rode a Kawasaki for Team Tedder until a huge crash with Trey Canard ended his season early. He returned with Team Tedder in 2016 and put in some solid rides in the first three rounds, including an eighth place at round two in San Diego. In one of the most stacked fields in the history of the sport, Weimer sat ninth in points after three rounds on a privateer Kawasaki KX450F. He was ahead of Marvin Musquin, Trey Canard, Chris Pourcel, Wil Hahn, Dean Wilson, Justin Barcia and more.

After round two, RCH Suzuki's Broc Tickle broke his arm, and talks began with Weimer to become a fill-in racer on Tickle's vacated RM-Z450. Things were ironed out after round three, and Weimer showed up at Oakland beaming.

"I really like the bike," Weimer said. "I felt good on it right away when I rode it, and I just want to make the best of this opportunity."

Weimer was allowed to bring all of his personal sponsors to the team, and he is contracted at this point to finish the 2016 Supercross Championship as the team-mate to Ken Roczen. In Oakland, Weimer matched his best finish of 2016 with eighth place, but said he believes he will get better as time goes on and he gets more used to the bike.



*Jake Weimer is happy with his new ride*

## WEBB ◀

Cooper Webb might be the most determined racer on the track right now stateside. In the first three races of the year, he came from behind to win – easily – every main event. At round four, he started nearer to the front than he had at any event run so far and took over the lead early in the race. Pro Circuit's Joey Savatgy gave chase, but with only three laps remaining in the race, Webb's YZ250F sputtered to a halt. He kicked it for two laps before he got it going again, but the damage was done. Webb was credited with 21st place and lost the points lead in the debacle. But what caused it?

The team indicates it was "electrical" but eventually the word came out that it was some sort of vapour lock that occurred when a check valve either malfunctioned or was installed upside-down.

Webb now trails by a couple of points but considering how badly he was beating his competition prior to his mechanical malfunction, the chances are pretty slim that he will lose the 2016 250cc West.



*Cooper Webb has been dominant in the 250 West series so far*





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Christian Craig has been very potent on the Geico Honda



## CRAIG ◀

Christian Craig is a very rare case. The son of '90s factory-support bad-ass Mike Craig, Christian Craig came into the pros riding for the Troy Lee Designs Honda team. He had a massive crash during the pre-season before his first year and broke his back. TLD guaranteed his ride, but when Craig came back, he was never quite the racer he was before he was hurt.

Years went by and eventually Craig fell in love with Paige Majkrzak, the daughter of very wealthy GEICO Honda team co-owner Jeff Majkrzak. After a while, the two were married, and Craig's father-in-law offered to put Craig through school and then help him find a spot at one of his companies. Essentially, for the first time in Craig's life, he knew he was going to be okay in terms of finances.

With that pressure removed, Craig eventually decided he wanted to go racing again. In 2015, Jeff Majkrzak made a deal with Craig that would see him race a 450 in the last half or so of the AMA Nationals for the GEICO Honda team. Craig was never very good outdoors, and the thought was that in the 450cc class, he'd have a better chance to score points.

However, the 250cc team started losing racers, and they had Craig test a 250. And he was fast. Really fast. So fast that he started racing again about a month before he was planning on coming back, and he did it in the stacked 250cc class. And he was immediately in the top five.

Fast-forward to 2016, and Craig is now a full-fledged racer on one of the top teams in the sport, and although he had trouble at Anaheim 1, he finished fourth in San Diego, then led half of the race at Anaheim 2 before being caught and passed (after quite a struggle) by Webb, and then by Zach Osborne.

Still, Craig landed his first supercross podium, then repeated it a week later in Oakland, where he fell while leading but still recovered for third place. Now, he's in the top five in points, and he's shared the podium with his and wife Paige's baby son Jagger. If it all ended now, it would be considered a success. But chances are that he doesn't plan for it to end now.

## PEICK VERSUS FRIESE ◀

By now, many of you have seen the video of Weston Peick beating the holy living crap out of Vince Friese's helmet. If not, look it up. It's everywhere. But there are a few things about this that you should know:

First, Vince Friese is notorious for riding dirty. He won his only title at Loretta Lynn's by blasting a guy off the track in the final moto. In his rookie pro season, he had the established pros bristling at his ability to get good starts and then ride dirty to keep people behind him, doing things like cross-jumping over big obstacles, hitting the whoops at an angle in order to cut across in front of a guy gaining on him, or just dive-bombing them in corners. At the first-ever Red Bull Straight Rhythm – and this is true – he actually asked if he was allowed to go into his competitor's lane once he got out front. No sh\*t.

He's so notorious for this behaviour that even Kevin Windham, at the inaugural Monster Energy Cup, caught Friese in one race and immediately took Friese out because, "I wasn't going to be dealing with his shit for the next few laps."

At Anaheim 1, Friese took Peick out twice. The first time was when he ran Peick off the track in the whoops after Peick had just passed him. The second time, Peick had just passed him again, and Friese torpedoed him in a corner, knocking them both down in the process. And Peick had enough and began punching Friese in the back of the helmet.

So, the first point here is that Friese has had

a butt-kicking coming for years. In the "old days" such as the '80s or '90s, if someone rode like Friese does, it wouldn't be long before someone met them at their truck in the pits and beat the snot out of them. It happened quite frequently back then. Friese should consider himself lucky Peick didn't go to his pit after the race instead.

But here's the problem: Friese has never been penalized for this kind of riding, but they not only DQ'd Peick from Anaheim 1 – they actually banned him from the following race in San Diego as well. Why? "Actions detrimental to the sport."

Now, if his actions truly were "detrimental to the sport," why would the promoter Feld Motorsports send the clip to ESPN and any other network that would take it, and use it as promotion for every race that has followed?

Because obviously it's not detrimental to the sport. It's good for the sport. What's bad for the sport is when one rider is such a rolling chicane that he ruins the racing among the top racers.



Peick unloaded a barrage of punches on Friese at Anaheim 1 but paid a hefty penalty – a £5k round and one week ban



## TOMAC ◀

Prior to the start of the 2016 season, the last time we saw Eli Tomac in action, he was absolutely dominating the 2015 450cc Nationals. Then, in Colorado, he crashed hard and injured both of his shoulders. He had already signed with the Monster Energy Kawasaki team for 2016 and beyond, though, and he healed up in plenty of time to get his testing done on the KX450F – utilizing (at his request) the same KYB suspension he had on his Honda.

His shoulders still aren't as strong as they were prior to his crash, but he was confident prior to round one that his shoulders and bike were good enough that he should be near the front. He even went as far as to say that his KX450F was way easier to get set up correctly for him than his Honda was.

Although Tomac has won a couple of heat races, he finished fourth in the first three main events of the year, and then seventh in Oakland. He's sixth in points. It's certainly not what he thought was going to happen coming into the season. So what's ailing Tomac?

The only thing we can say for sure is that he definitely doesn't look as smooth and comfortable on the Kawasaki as he did on the Honda he raced in 2015. What we can't say is why. Is he riding so stiff because his shoulders are still not quite right? Is he riding stiff because the pace is faster than he anticipated? Is it an issue with the setup on his new machine? Or is it a combination of all of these things?

For that matter, it might be that he's just better racing outdoors. We'll see come Hangtown, because before long, the Dungey train is going to be unstoppable indoors.



## POURCEL ◀

If it's difficult to figure out Eli Tomac's situation, Chris Pourcel's is impossible. Pourcel hasn't raced supercross for five years but in the four rounds run so far, he has qualified number one twice, number two once, and number three once. In short, he's really fast.

But he's 13th in points with 18th, 13th, 12th and 14th-place finishes. How does that happen?

When asked about it, he was quick to point out that he hasn't raced supercross in five years, but he also said he's trying to be patient.

"It's been five years," Pourcel said. "I'm fast enough, but I'm not ready yet. Give me a few rounds."

Pourcel is confident with his speed, but not confident with his fitness, or his ability to ride that well in traffic. So that's what has him scoring lackluster results. His fitness may be better in a few rounds, but the traffic is always going to be there unless he begins getting better starts. We'll see.





*We're yet to see the best of Eli Tomac in 2016*



*Chris Pourcel is fast in practice but has failed to transfer that pace to the races and often ends up mired midpack*



*Chad Reed has started the season on a high and hopes to keep the good times comin'*

## REED ◀

Chad Reed's return to Yamaha was a great story just prior to the start of the season but it got much better after round two in San Diego, where he gave chase to Ryan Dungey for 20 laps on his way to a close second place finish. He was jubilant after the race.

"I'm just so happy that things are coming around," Reed said. "Last time I was with Yamaha, if I got second, I would be pissed, but this feels great. It's like a win for me."

He followed that up with another second place the following week at Anaheim 2, although a bit farther back. He seemed less happy, but he was still saying the right things.

"I'm (sigh) happy..." Reed said. "I'm just trying to enjoy each one of these races because you never know which podium will be the last one."

On paper, if you asked Reed prior to the season how he'd feel after four races if he were tied for second in points, chances are he would've said he'd be really happy with that. However, Reed knows he's lacking a little bit of corner speed as compared to Ryan Dungey, and he hasn't figured out where he can find that speed, or make up for it elsewhere. If he doesn't get a win soon, his jubilation will soon turn to frustration.

"I'm out here because I just know I'm not done yet," Reed said. "I'm out here to compete. I'm out here to win. That's why I line up."

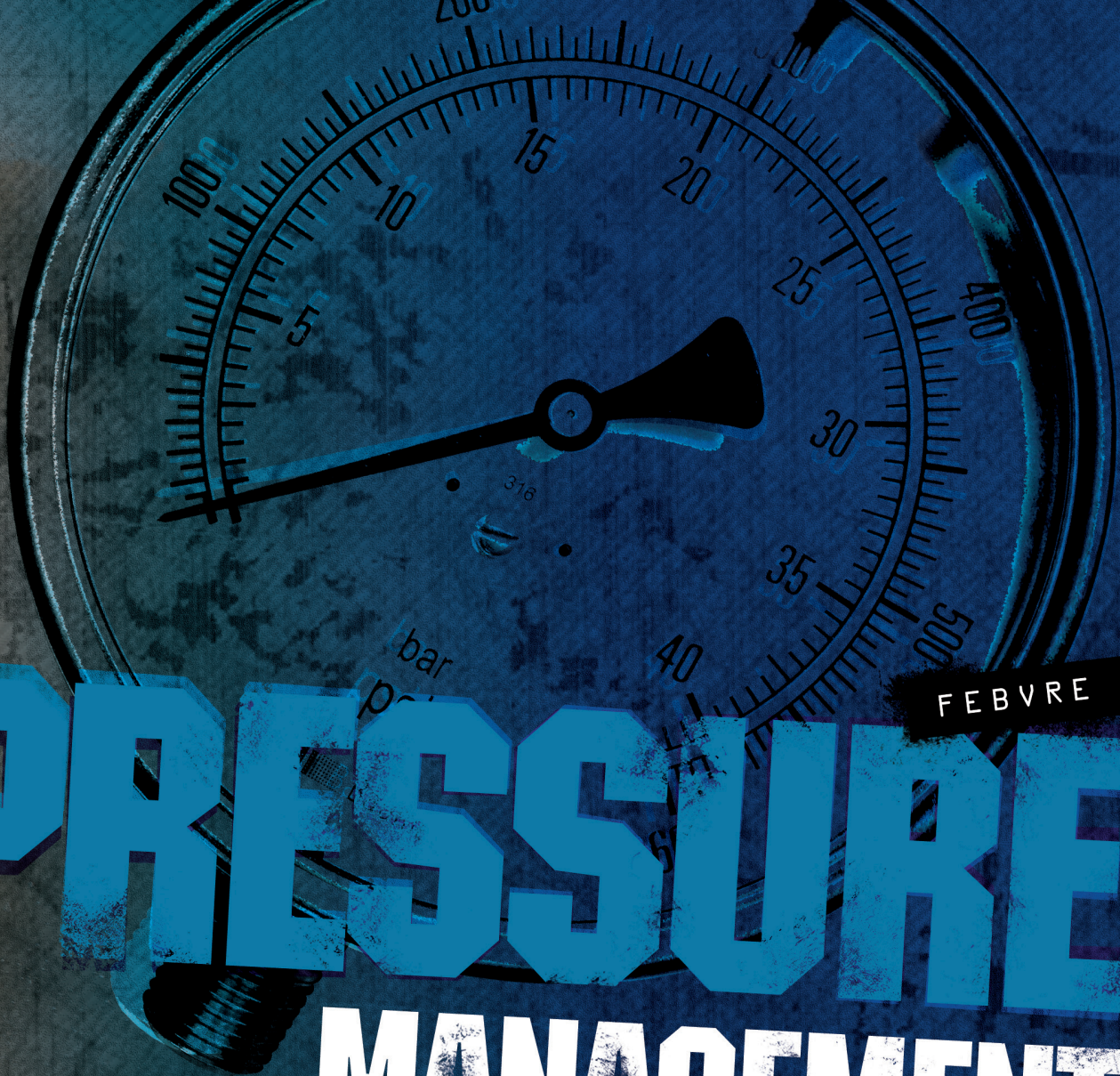
But ultimately, Reed's return to Yamaha serves a secondary purpose as well – Reed has resurrected the official Yamaha factory racing team, and he plans to race the supercross series this year as well as the two US GPs (in North Carolina and at Glen Helen) and the Monster Energy Cup. In 2017, chances are good the team (with or without Reed) will race the AMA Nationals as well. Yamaha resurrected their official factory team because they knew that in the next few years they were going to have Cooper Webb and Jeremy Martin moving up from the 250cc class to the 450cc class, and they wanted to make sure they had room for the young speedsters to race Yamahas in the 450cc class.

And what better mentor than Chad Reed?









FEBVRE

# PRESSURE MANAGEMENT

How well is last year's rookie sensation Romain Febvre coping with the extra pressure to defend his MXGP title in 2016?

Words by **Future7Media** Photos by **Yamaha**

**A** major question to be answered once the 2016 FIM Motocross World Championship kicks off is whether reigning champion Romain Febvre will continue where he left off as a dominant force in MXGP competition. Over the past 12 months the Frenchman has come a long way. The newcomer that nobody counted as a title favourite early in 2015 went on to secure a total of 15 moto wins and eight GP victories. Providing his own convincing answer to the pre-season buzz focusing solely on Villopoto and Cairoli, he clinched the MXGP title in his first attempt. But things are different now. When the gate drops in Qatar on February 27 Febvre will be anything but the 'outsider'. With a target on his back #461 will begin the defence of his world title against a full, fresh and focused MXGP grid. Looking forward to this new challenge DBR caught up with the Frenchman to learn more about what it's like starting the new season as the rider everyone wants to beat...

>>





# PRESSURE

FEBVRE

# MANAGEMENT



**DBR:** Romain, it's said defending a title is tougher than winning one the first time. Is that how you see things?

**RF:** "There's people saying a second world title is always harder than a first one. But I see things in a different way. For me it was way harder to get that first title, especially being a complete rookie in the MXGP class. There were things I didn't know but learned during the season. I learned how to manage pressure and how to approach each race. I got a bunch of experience and now I'm planning to make the most of it."

**DBR:** Is the 'extra pressure' something that worries you?

**RF:** "I know what it takes to be world champion and having that extra knowledge gives me loads of confidence. I believe it's all about knowing what you can achieve and having the correct people around to help you do it. I'm lucky to have a team that's standing 100 per cent by my side. The way I see things, it's going to be easier in 2016 as I can start the new season more relaxed. I can take it easy in the first round and then build on the momentum I've got from last year."

**DBR:** How important was it for you to keep riding and racing throughout the off-season?

**RF:** "I don't like staying away from a bike. It makes me scared I'll lose track of my preparation for the year to come. Even in the off-season I ride at least once a week to keep the flow. It's been a crazy couple of months since last season officially ended. I went to the US, raced in Japan and got a taste of Supercross racing. It was a busy winter but that's how I wanted it to be. I didn't take much time away from the bike. In the middle of January I got down to Sardinia and that's where the main part of my preparation is taking place."

**DBR:** From an MXGP rookie who enjoyed doing things in the privacy of his own surroundings to a world champion – how has life changed over the past 12 months?

**RF:** "My life is the same basically. The only thing that's different is the way people and the media approach me. Everywhere I go there's so many more people to talk to and interviews to give. To be honest I struggled in the beginning. I wasn't used to the attention. But I had the right people around me so I learned to handle it way better. At the end of the day it goes down to how well you organise everything. I'm just glad there are people around that help me a lot."

**DBR:** After such a great season, in what ways do you expect 2016 to be different?

**RF:** "It's a completely new challenge. And I expect things to be difficult. There'll be lots of great riders behind the gate. It's not just Qatar, Thailand or simply the first few rounds of the series. It's going to be another long season and 18 rounds to win or lose it all. The way I see it I've got the right tools to make things work again. But as we saw you also need to have luck by your side and stay away from injuries."

**DBR:** What's of greater importance, to start the series with GP victories or to remain consistent and build on that during the season?

**RF:** "Winning races is one thing but being there week in week out is a different story. If you want to win a championship the most difficult thing is to be consistent in every race. You have to avoid mistakes that might cost a lot. Victories are the best thing that could happen but unfortunately it's not possible every time. But it's the same for >>





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# PRESSURE

FEBRUARY

everyone. If you look at the 2016 grid there's just so many guys in MXGP who can win races. It's the same challenge for everyone and I just hope to get the best shot at the title again."

**DBR:** As the defending champion surely you're only interested in retaining your world title?

**RF:** "I want to win again, I'm not planning to be fifth or sixth that's for certain. I just want to get some good results in the first rounds and then continue building on that. I'd like to get things rolling the way I did in 2015. I took it easy in the first few rounds to check my speed and find my limits. I also had the chance to see how others were doing at that time. Once I got everything in the right place I could start looking for the results. I have a similar plan of attack for 2016 and the key is to take each race separately."

**DBR:** Have you made any major changes in

your 2016 preparations?

**RF:** "I still do all of my training by myself, like I did last year. I didn't change many things. Before I just got the chance to prepare better. Before 2015 I had an injury in winter so couldn't ride as much as I wanted to. I was also left behind with testing on my new Yamaha back then. But now it's way better. We did a lot of testing right after the season ended. At this moment my preparation is going good and I hope it stays like that."

**DBR:** Speaking about the YZ450FM, how different is the 2016 machine compared to last year?

**RF:** "Yamaha introduced a new bike for 2016. It's got changes in the frame, the triple clamps and in many other smaller parts. The new bike is easier in the slow-speed corners and overall gives an improved feeling of confidence. >>





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## A WORD WITH THE TEAM!

### Michele Rinaldi's view . . .

"What Romain did last year was remarkable. I knew he would grow during the season but I wasn't expecting him to be so fast and mistake free. I'm glad he exceeded my expectations. I was surprised by how high he had set the bar. Even when finishing fourth or fifth he wasn't satisfied."

He thought he could do better. With all riders in the field, even the ones who got injured, I think Romain was the fastest and most capable to win the 2015 title."

"Romain now has all the elements to reconfirm his status among the top guys. It's a new season and a new start for everybody. I think it'll make Romain a bit more relaxed if he could prove to others and maybe to himself that he hasn't lost his speed and consistency. It's his first year after such a great season so everything needs to be reconfirmed."

### Jeremy van Horebeek's thoughts

"It's impressive how Romain's story resembles my own. I had a great first season with Yamaha in 2014. I got 13 podiums and ended up second in the championship. Romain did even better. It was awesome he won the title. I know lots of guys were injured but that's the sport."

"The hardest thing now is to handle the pressure. After such an incredible season you get people thinking it's going to be easy. It happened to me last year. I was second in 2014 before and everybody thought I could win it in 2015. But I messed up. It's hard to stay focused when people expect so much. I'm still trying to figure out how it's done."



We use lots of factory parts in our racing machine. I'm satisfied by the progress made as we've managed to improve the bike's handling and engine. I believe we have a better set-up than last year. It remains to be seen how well we'll perform once the season commences."

**DBR:** Do you share feedback with Jeremy van Horebeek when it comes to bike development?

**RF:** "It's part of the team's strategy not to have riders share information between them. Even when we're testing we never test together. It's a way to be more focused on what's best for each one of us and not be influenced by what the other rider needs. I think it's a good way to work as it helps keep the mind open too."

**DBR:** Does being a world champion change the balance inside the Monster Energy Yamaha Factory MXGP Team?

**RF:** "No, there never was a #1 and #2 rider in our team. It's something I understood from the beginning and when Jeremy was second in the series. We've got a lot of support from Yamaha. All the guys in our team work equally well for both of us. They give 100 per cent no matter who needs their help and that's not going to change. It's like a big family. I guess it helps

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that most people are Italian. I'm happy with the way things are."

**DBR:** How important for you is to be surrounded by the right people?

**RF:** "It is everything really. The team support me a lot. They're always around me, even when I train. We've developed a bond of trust and everyone knows what to do. We have such a good relationship and they're not afraid to tell me the truth."

**DBR:** Let's talk about the season ahead. What kind of improvements do you expect to see from an organisational point of view?

**RF:** "I think there's room for improvement in terms of track preparation. I'm pretty sure it's going to be better this year. We've had lots and lots of meetings about the tracks with Youthstream. I think tracks played a major part in the 2015 series losing so many riders due to injuries. I hope they've listened to our demands and things will improve. They already announced changes in the way the tracks will be prepared before and during each GP."

**DBR:** What would you highlight as the main reasons for so many riders getting injured in 2015?

**RF:** "It's difficult to say but the bar is set high and competition is insane. We're always pushing our limits trying to be faster. Everyone is taking more risks as well. If the tracks aren't better in 2016 we'll keep having riders getting injured but it's not just that. I believe riders should be more aware of the situation and try not to push over the limits and risk it all."

**DBR:** Finally, are there any riders you have your eye on as expected title challengers?

**RF:** "There are so many guys who can win and it's difficult to select names. I never do it. I just stay focused on my own effort. That's how I'm going to approach the new championship. I know what I need to do. As we saw last year everything is possible and you should always expect to be surprised. We also have lots of guys coming from MX2 this season so maybe there's a something coming from there." |





# FEBVRE'S FAVOURITES!

Romain's best bits from 2015...



## #1 MXGP of France — May 30/31

"What an incredible race! I got my first GP win that weekend on home soil."



## #2 MXGP of The Netherlands — August 29/30

"I won the second moto and secured the championship in Assen. And I never used to be good in the sand."



## #3 MXoN — September 26/27

"What can I say about the Nations! It was the first time I raced for France and we won in front of our fans."



## LIVIN' IN LOMMEL

### Romain's second home...

"I've been based in Lommel for the past three years. There are so many great people living there who are passionate about motocross racing. No matter where you're coming from you're always welcome. There's a huge selection of tracks to go riding during the week. There's also the option to drive to Holland and train in sand. I think that's where I need to improve the most."





# YELLOW PAGES!

*Jack Burnicle dedicates his column to the exploits of Sylvain Geboers and the factory Suzuki squad . . .*

Words and photos by **Jack Burnicle**

**I**n a return to his early grand prix roots, Stefan Everts has taken charge of Suzuki's grand prix future by acquiring Geboers Racing Promotions from long-time Suzuki boss Sylvain Geboers. It's a bold move, reuniting him with the Hamamatsu factory for whom he won the first of his 10 world titles as a teenager, way back in 1991. Geboers, based at Mol, close to the fabled sand track of Lommel, has run Suzuki's works grand prix team almost exclusively since 1979 and was team boss during Everts' early exploits. Now, the 70 year-old former world vice-champion and 14-time grand prix winner is retiring to relax with his expanding family!

Sylvain raced for BSA, Matchless, CZ, Suzuki and Husqvarna, he and his greatest rival Joel Robert forming the first full-scale Japanese factory squad to enter MXGPs in 1970. Six times a Trophee and Motocross des Nations winner alongside Roger De Coster, Geboers started racing in 1962, immediately won the Belgian junior championship and embarked on an international career in 1964, contesting the MX des at Hawkstone Park on a Gold Star BSA! Matchless and CZ, both impressed, offered contracts. "I chose Matchless," laughs the affable Belgian. "A big mistake. I couldn't handle it and the two-strokes were coming through!"

It took until 1967, when he finally signed for CZ, to start running at the front. Third overall in the 1968 250cc world championship and a grand prix winner at Genk, he lost out to CZ team-mate Robert in 1969, both beating the first ever works Suzuki grand prix rider, >>



# DOWN



*Grimly determined Harry Everts defended his 125 world title in 1980*



A large, detailed close-up of the Matrix Pro Sport knee brace, showing its grey and black plastic components, straps, and the 'MATRIX' branding on the side.

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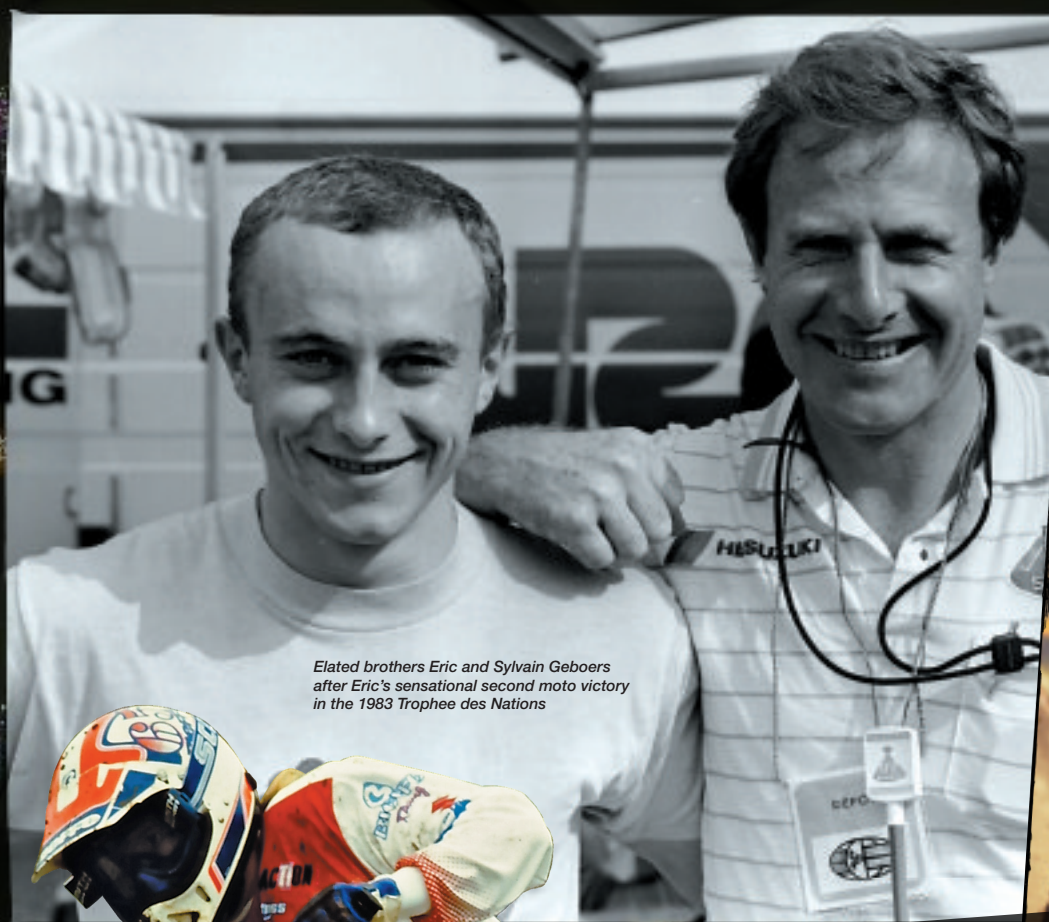
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Elated brothers Eric and Sylvain Geboers after Eric's sensational second moto victory in the 1983 Trophee des Nations

Greg Albertyn (Johnson Suzuki) skips to a dramatic 1994 250 world title at Gaildorf. Note the exquisite exhaust pipe produced specially for the final round decider



Donny Schmit (Suzuki) winning the second moto of the 1990 British 125GP at Nantwich

third-placed Olle Petersson. They then joined the Swede at Suzuki and 1970 saw Sylvain and Joel locked together again, winning four GPs apiece, Robert triumphant by just two points!

Robert won two more titles for Suzuki, with Geboers finishing twice third and scoring his last GP victory at Valkenswaard in 1974 before leaving to ride Husqvarnas. "Another big mistake," he chuckles. "I should have stayed with Suzuki because they were the best!" The split was amicable. It could scarcely have been any other because the sandy-haired, freckled-faced Sylvain is as benign and gentle a fellow as you could meet, his features constantly lit by a wide, warm smile. The eldest of five racing brothers, he retired suddenly because of a knee injury on August 16 1978, while actually racing at Mol – coincidentally the very day his youngest brother Eric, 17 years his junior, rode his first race!

Immediately another young Belgian star, Stefan's father Harry Everts asked Sylvain for assistance to revive his apparently ailing career. 250 world champion on a Puch in 1975, Harry was struggling at Bultaco. Sylvain agreed to help but found no Japanese 250 ride available. Suzuki, however, were losing their three-time 125 world champion Gaston Rahier to Yamaha and offered a full-blown 125 factory contract. So with Geobers as his mechanic and team manager Everts went on to win three back-to-back 125cc world titles for Suzuki from 1979 to 1981. Meantime kid brother Eric had also joined the squad – nothing like a bit of family influence! >>

Reigning 125 world champ Eric Geboers (250 Suzuki) hunted down and beat American David Bailey in the 1983 Trophee des Nations



# YELLOW PAGES!



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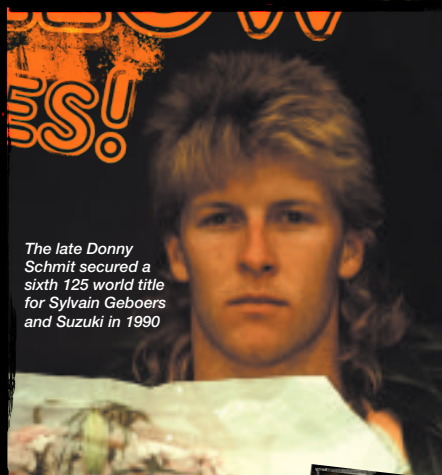
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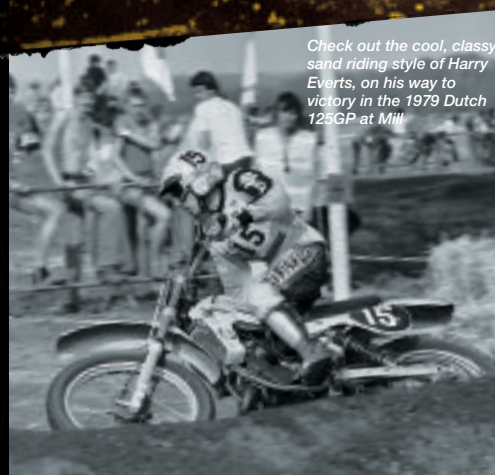


NITROCIRCUS





The late Donny Schmit secured a sixth 125 world title for Sylvain Geboers and Suzuki in 1990



Check out the cool, classy sand riding style of Harry Everts, on his way to victory in the 1979 Dutch 125GP at Mill



Little Harry Everts and his hirsute teenaged son Stefan in 1991



Former Suzuki team-mates Sylvain Geboers and Joel Robert catch up over a beer (and in Joel's case, a Gauloise!) at Namur



Triumphant Sylvain Geboers (right) with Greg Albertyn's dad Tony after Albee's 1994 success in Germany



Sylvain Geboers, Greg Albertyn, mechanic Ian Harrison and the factory Suzuki after securing the 1994 250 world

– and took over as world champ in 1982. By then Sylvain had persuaded Suzuki to hire a mechanic and he became full-time manager for Hamamatsu's grand prix motocross department.

Eric won two 125 crowns while Brad Lackey and Georges Jobe were successful on 500 and 250 and Eric ended 1983 with a flourish, victorious on his RM250 in the Trophee des Nations in Czechoslovakia. But without warning Suzuki shut down their competition department. Eric signed for Honda to race 500GPs and Sylvain joined him as mechanic for three years. "Working together as brothers was great," enthuses Sylvain. "But when you go racing you must also have fun. Eric was not having enough fun. So we separated as a team." He bursts into peals of mirth. "That was successful for Eric, because from then on he started to be world champion again!"

Sylvain spent two years working for Eric's helicopter company until Italian entrepreneur Giuseppe Luongo (now owner of all-powerful grand prix promoters Youthstream) first popped up, offering Sylvain title sponsorship from Bieffe if Geboers could get bikes. Thus was born the Bieffe Suzuki squad, racing back in 125GPs because of Sylvain's longstanding friendship with Chesterfield team boss Michele Rinaldi, who ran Suzuki's 250GP team. They had worked together in 1983, when Rinaldi raced as team-mate to Eric Geboers. "I respect his work and his set-up," explains Sylvain. "So I honestly never wanted to compete with Michele. But when he changed from Suzuki to Yamaha in 1992 that opened up a gap for me in 250s."

By then Geboers' Bieffe squad had enjoyed

almost instant success on the RM125, American Donny Schmit winning the 1990 world title in his rookie season. He was succeeded as champion by a young man Sylvain had spotted as a 13 year-old, Harry Everts' son Stefan. With Schmit injured early on Everts junior emerged to claim his first world title after a season-long ding-dong with KTM's Bob Moore. But Luongo's company went bust (really?!) and Sylvain was once more going it alone, as the Geboers Racing Corporation.

"At the end of 1991 Michele came to me and said 'I need one of your riders to come to Yamaha'". It meant Sylvain choosing between Schmit and Everts; he went with Stefan, because Everts was young, promising – and Belgian!

So Donny moved to Yamaha and Stefan on to the RM250 for 1992, a year in which Schmit became 250 world champ with Rinaldi and Everts got hurt. The following year Stefan finished second to South African Greg Albertyn while Dutchman Pedro Tragter secured Suzuki's 13th 125 world championship. Then Stefan, the favoured son, announced he was off to Kawasaki. Sylvain was initially devastated. But he'd learned how to handle disappointment during his racing career.

"I had many breakdowns and injuries but I was always thinking about the next race right away," he says. "We'll do it next week, or next year. I never thought of myself as a loser. I just ran out of time! Every race I went out and tried to win instead of thinking of the championship. That was my mistake. But all these things you learn by experience and that helped me to understand why Stefan wanted to leave

the team."

He reacted quickly. "I thought somewhere, I have Greg's phone number," he laughs, having considered hiring the South African a year earlier. "Let's find out what he is doing!" A few days later Greg called back – 'prepare the number one plate on my bike!'

Geboers also signed popular Belgian Marnicq Bervoerts who brought with him invaluable headline sponsor Johnson – a major Belgian cigarette company, and was joined as co-owner of the Geboers Racing Corporation by kid brother Eric. All was set for a terrific season together, once more confining Everts to the number two plate after a thrilling season in which 'Albee' sealed the crown from Stefan in a tense, memorable climax at Gaildorf. But Greg harboured ambitions to race in the States. "His mind was set on the USA, so it had to be the USA," smiles Sylvain ruefully. "Working with Greg had been an absolute pleasure so I did everything I could to get things sorted out for him with Roger (De Coster) at Suzuki America."

Deprived once more of his star turn Geboers underwent seven barren seasons before Frenchman Mikael Pichon won back-to-back 250 titles in 2001 and 2002. Since when only Steve Ramon's 2007 MX1 championship has come Suzuki's way, though Sylvain's main man Clement Desalle mirrored his team boss's career, four times runner-up and only deprived of the ultimate acclaim by a cruel combination of injuries and a supremely gifted rival!

So after 30 seasons and a dozen world titles Sylvain Geboers hands over Suzuki's grand prix reigns in good health to the man who walked out on him 21 years ago. Welcome back Stefan!





# Taking On The Two







# World

## How four British Juniors are charging hard at SuperEnduro

Words and Photos by Future7Media

**I**t's not just Jonny Walker and Paul Bolton who are flying the flag for Britain in the SuperEnduro World Championship. In the Junior ranks, four British riders are currently inside the top 10 overall standings after two rounds.

Proving that there's talent rising through the indoor ranks, Gethin Humphreys, Lee Sealey, William Hoare and Josh Gotts are consistently battling at the sharp end of the scoring sheet. Top of the group, Humphreys has already landed on the podium at round one of the championship in Poland. With a year's indoor experience under his belt, the Welshman was an impressive third overall in 2015 despite landing himself in a Brazilian hospital with a set of broken ribs.

For both Sealey and Gotts, the duo are using the series as a way to prepare themselves for the upcoming Enduro World Championship, while Hoare – the youngest of the group – is getting his first ever taste of international competition. Despite rarely venturing outside the North of England, Hoare is proving to be the surprise of the bunch splitting both Sealey and Gotts in the overall standings for eighth.

With two rounds now under their belts, it was time to round up the British quartet and get their take on racing SuperEnduro...

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Gethin Humphreys feels like he's stepped up his game in 2016

## Gethin Humphreys

DoB: 30/12/1993

Bike: Husqvarna FE 250

Team: CF Racing Husqvarna

"Last year was my first full season racing the SuperEnduro World Championship. I started off with some good results and got second overall at round four in Mexico. Then things didn't really go to plan in Brazil. I came out of the water pit and crashed heavily on my ribs.

"It was pretty wild. I spent five days in the hospital before I was allowed to fly home. At that point I was third in the championship but missed out on racing the final round in France and ended the series fourth overall."

"I definitely feel better about the championship now. I feel like I've stepped up my game from last year but it's hard with the weather. Conditions are so bad that there's no point trying to ride the bike. It's difficult to come into SuperEnduro without turning a wheel. Riding enduro or extreme is not the same thing. But I try not to think about it so much. That's just how it is."

"My decision to focus on SuperEnduro instead of the EWC is mostly to do with costs. In SuperEnduro you can show up by yourself and kind of manage everything. In traditional enduro you need more back up, more people helping you out. It's a bigger step I think.

"Paul Edmondson as a track inspector is really good for the sport. He knows what the riders want and he listens to them. He's bringing speed back into the tracks and it's making them more exciting. In Germany we had some fast sections, some nice jumps and some more technical stuff too."

"Finishing on the podium in my first race back from injury in Poland was incredible. It was definitely a big confidence booster. But the truth is I didn't ride the way I wanted to. I made too many mistakes but I suppose everybody else was making mistakes too."

"I was expecting Mani Lettenbichler to be fast because of his background. He's done a lot of extreme races and stuff. He's not making any mistakes whereas I'm making too many. He's the one to beat this year."

## Lee Sealey

DoB: 30/10/1996

Bike: Yamaha YZ125

Team: Yamaha UK Off Road Experience

"2016 is my first year committing to the series. It's a year of changes for me really. I started racing a Yamaha YZ125 so thought it'd be a great idea to do the SuperEnduro series for practice. Hopefully I'll do the Enduro World Championship later on too."

"Round one in Poland was good. I started off with third in the first race and finished the night fourth overall. I struggled a bit more in Germany. It was an up and down night. I got second in race two but ended up seventh overall."

"Indoor racing needs a totally different type of training compared to traditional enduro. It's a lot more physical and difficult. Arm pump is instant. Probably the hardest part is adjusting to the intensity of it. You've got to do some motocross just to get used to that."

"In the Junior class there's always something happening on the course. You're always with someone you know every time on the track. I'd say it's pretty competitive. Even though it's competitive I'm just trying to be having fun with the rest of the guys. With us British Junior lads it's battle to beat each other and that's good for everybody."

"Last year I did the European Enduro Championship and also raced the International Six Days Enduro with the British Junior Team. The ISDE was a big box to tick. I crashed on day three and hurt my ribs so that slowed my chances for a better overall result. But it was definitely a good experience. Hopefully I'll get picked again to race for Team Great Britain in 2016."

"I'm targeting a top five overall finish this year in SuperEnduro. Unfortunately I'm not doing the two rounds in South America so it's going to be difficult to make up the lost ground. At the moment I'm sixth overall just five points from the top five."



Lee Sealey is searching for a top five finish in the SuperEnduro series





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# Josh Gotts

DoB: 26/07/1993

Bike: TM EN 250

Team: Electriction TM

"This is my second full season of SuperEnduro. My best ever result was fourth in the first race in France last year. I had quite a good start and kept a good rhythm going. In the last couple of laps a few people crashed in front of me. I got around them and kept it up. The track was massively technical with lots of logs. I surprised myself there and ended up fourth overall too.

"The key to success is getting a good start. If you manage to get a decent start and stay clean for the first couple of laps you'll get a good result. Everything can change in the blink of an eye. If you crash or if someone crashes in front of you, you can lose four places just like that.

"Having an Under-23 class in the series is great. Guys with less experience can have a go and see where they're at. With riders of the same ability in the same class makes it even more competitive.

"It's definitely great having British riders like Jonny Walker and Paul Bolton race the Prestige class. I look up to them and they're helpful too. We walk the tracks together and get some useful tips.

"Our biggest problem is that we can't really practice for SuperEnduro in the UK. There are no indoor tracks. We can't even test the bike in similar conditions. And when you come to a SuperEnduro round you realise how different everything is. If you're living in Spain or France things are definitely better.

"My goal is a top six from the SuperEnduro series and maybe a top ten from the Enduro World Championship. I'll do the full series in the EWC. It'll be my first full season in the series. I'm just hoping to get as much international experience as possible."



TM's Josh Gotts enjoys the level playing field of the Under-23 class



William Hoare gets stuck in on the MRS Sherco



# William Hoare

DoB: 02/11/1998

Bike: Sherco 250 SEF-R

Team: MPS Racing

"Racing the SuperEnduro series has been a big step for me as I haven't really done a lot of stuff. I just love riding bikes. We have a farm and I ride my bike all the time. I did a few trials when I was younger and this year I decided to give the SuperEnduro World Championship a go.

"A trials background definitely helps in the extreme section. When there are many obstacles, tyres and logs it's better. But when the track has lots of jumps, it's another story.

"When racing in a stadium you tend to block out the noise of the crowd. You just see straight past it when you're concentrated. It's more intense than you can imagine. You get arm pump after about a lap and you're knackered really. But you have to keep going.

"Things were good in Poland. I ended up seventh overall and got fourth in race two. In Germany I wanted to qualify on the front row but didn't make it. The track was really tight and if anyone made a mistake in front of you it would take you with them. But eighth overall was brilliant.

"Gaining experience is really what I need to work on. It's my first year racing the SuperEnduro series, my first time out of the North of England, so the more experience I get, the better it will be for the future."







## Inspector Edmondson

Catching up with Fast Eddy — the FIM's SuperEnduro Course Inspector

Becoming more involved with the SuperEnduro series, Paul Edmondson has rolled up his sleeves for 2016 and is the FIM's Course Inspector. Acting as an overseer of track design, track build and then mediating between riders and officials on how the actual course is riding, he's become a busy guy at the races...

**DBR:** Paul, firstly, what's your official role in the SuperEnduro World Championship?

**PE:** "I'm the Course Inspector for the 2016 SuperEnduro World Championship. What I am basically trying to do is listen to the riders as well as the organisers. I want to help both sides. If we keep the riders happy that's a good thing. But obviously I have to keep the organiser happy as well because without them we wouldn't have the events."

**DBR:** How did a job like that come about then?

**PE:** "Alain Blanchard, who promotes the series, asked me if I'd be interested in the job. I wanted to get involved with SuperEnduro and thought it was time to try and give something back to enduro."

**DBR:** What makes a good endurocross track give the best racing?

**PE:** "Less is more when it comes to designing a track. You've got to design particular sections that can make a difference. We need at least three lines through sections to make overtaking possible. But it's bloody difficult to make that happen. In Poland there were a few lines in the corners but the track in Germany was mostly one-lined."

**DBR:** As a former racer do you feel that helps when dealing with riders?

**PE:** "It certainly helps a lot to see what riders want. They're good guys. They've been respecting me which is the main thing. In Poland they were jumping on yellow flags so I said they need to calm it down. They were respectful – it's working well."

**DBR:** Overall how is the role as Course Inspector going?

**PE:** "Poland and Germany have gone well. They were pretty different events. In Poland they let me do everything. Then in Germany they kind of had their own opinions and ideas, which is sometimes good."

**DBR:** How long term is this job as Course Inspector?

**PE:** "It's a year-to-year deal. It's just for the European rounds and not the overseas ones. Hopefully if they're happy, they'll ask me to stay on board. At the moment I just want to see if I can make a difference for this year."



Since Fast Eddy got involved the obstacles out on the track have got a little more diverse...





## View from the top!

The UK SuperEnduro elite offer up their opinion . . .

Jonny Walker and Paul Bolton are flying the British flag in the Prestige class in 2016. Both regulars on the SuperEnduro scene, they're impressed with the performance and effort the British Junior quartet are putting in to commit to the series...

"I never got a chance to do the Junior class in the SuperEnduro series," says Walker. "I wanted to but at the time we had to go straight to the Prestige class.

"I believe it's really good base for them

to learn. In England it's really difficult with the weather to practice SuperEnduro so I'm surprised at how well the guys are doing.

"There's a lot of travelling involved too, which makes it even harder. Unfortunately there's no round in the UK which is a bit disappointing. All four are riding decent and having a good go."

Mirroring Walker's comments, Bolton added that with a bit more support there's potential to develop some top future talent.

"It's mega for the sport seeing all the younger lads coming through in SuperEnduro. They're fully committed with some of them even driving to all these races but the British Junior riders aren't getting proper help or support.

"I believe it would be nice if the ACU could get some of us more experienced riders to help them like the Spanish Federation does. That'd push them forward and get them better."











# RECHARGED!

After years with Rockstar Suzuki Clement Desalle feels refreshed following his move to the Monster Energy Kawasaki squad which could mean bad things for his MXGP competition . . .

Words by Adam Wheeler Photos by Ray Archer



**C**lement Desalle is perched opposite us in the booth of a steakhouse. We've just finished dinner, the Belgian choosing the healthiest option on the vast menu of grilled chicken and vegetables. We were tempted by something far stickier here in the depths of Southern California where the business of riding a dirt bike is almost as large as the portions that hit restaurant tables. Desalle skips the dessert but we get the impression that this revitalised racer is ready to have his cake and scoff it in 2016.

For the second year in a row '25' looks physically prime (and almost proudly wears a new Monster Energy cap as the latest addition to the brand's MXGP stable). He's had enough time to get on-point with his prep after another devastating mid-season injury wrecked his aspirations of FIM World Championship glory in 2015.

Desalle is one of the fastest, most stylish and consistently potent motocrossers in the world. An athlete who has won Grands Prix every year since 2009 (with the exception of the dark 2015) and finished in the top three of the premier class five times from the last seven (two years

of fourth and 10th when hit by injury). Desalle is also still a bit of a mystery for racing fans – an 'old-school' believer of plying his trade and swiftly exiting stage-left without any of the frippery involved in being a public figure. He rarely parades his activities on social media, is a private person and wants little to do with the adoration and show on the periphery of racing.

It takes some time to understand Clement. For some, even including this journalist, a few years in fact. There is no disguising his ability on a motorcycle but his priorities when it comes to racing can puzzle media and fans. A struggle with English in his younger years earned him a reputation around the time of 2007-2008 of being aloof. His opinions on rivals, tracks and matters relating to his job are frank, honest and without fear. It is possible to draw parallels to riders such as Casey Stoner and Desalle's sensitivity with a bike and capacity for success further increase the similarity.

In the past he has been aggressive on the track and prepared to show his peers little quarter. This means he has sometimes been painted as say the darker alter ego to perennial rival Tony Cairoli – the accessible, fun-loving and open former multi champion.

Clement is actually well-mannered, respectful (to those who reciprocate), laughs easily and is passionate about his likes, such as animals, food, his friends and activities like attempting triathlons and local enduro events near his village in the Wallonie region of Belgium.

Desalle has been closely associated with factory Suzuki yellow since 2010 both in the landscape of MXGP and in the minds of its many fans and his somewhat surprising signature with Monster Energy Kawasaki – the transfer of the 2015 season – is arguably the most important contract of his career. Leaving the relatively safe confines of Suzuki where competitiveness for the title has been a virtual guarantee for over half a decade Desalle now carries the biggest question mark over his head since earning works rider status at the end of 2009. Resisting added punishment to his battered shoulders and making it through 2016 in good health will be one of the key ingredients for validation of his – and Kawasaki's – choice for the future and in search of the elusive MXGP crown.

Draining his refill of Coke and clearly happier to chat far from the frantic and demanding environment of a Grand Prix paddock Clement

*Desalle's paddle tyre digs into the Glamis sand as he warms up for our exclusive photoshoot*





is keen to expand on his refreshed view of MXGP...

**DBR:** I remember how devastated you looked last year when it became clear that another championship season had to end. What was that period like to deal with?

**CD:** "The Grands Prix in France and Italy, where I was injured and then tried to keep racing, were really difficult for me. I was really sad about the situation and it took me a long time to accept it – again – and to deal with more pain and to stop racing."

"At the time I was also thinking about how many points I'd lost in just two events and there was nothing I could do about it. I was so disappointed because I knew I'd done a good job and the start of the season had gone well. It was going as planned and I don't mean just with results but also the feeling I had [on the bike, confidence]. I know I am doing a dangerous sport...but I was still down about what had happened. After a little while you have to be realistic. Things could be worse. I had to keep that in mind and it was important to do so."

**DBR:** Was it frustrating also that it was yet

another shoulder injury? Your third...

**CD:** "That's true. When I get something it is often with the shoulders! Everything went wrong in France that weekend and I hurt my knee quite badly also. I had the same shoulder operated in 2011 but it was a 'light' operation; the damage inside was not that big so we decided for smaller surgery and it worked. I came back good and strong but to crash hard again in France meant it came out again."

**DBR:** Do you question the sport and your part in it when injuries happen or reoccur? It was another setback and another loss of work, time and effort...

**CD:** "Yes, that comes quickly...but then your passion for the sport comes back. I love to ride my bike, without question. Thinking about it [the crash] was on a slow lap and I didn't even want to jump the tabletop there in France. On that subject I have to come to the safety of the tracks. It is now a big point and everybody is talking about it, even Youthstream and the FIM, and last year it was not going in a good way. The top four MXGP riders all dropped away because of injury."

"France was the worst Grand Prix I have ever

seen for track preparation. It was unbelievable. The lap before I saw [Evgeny] Bobryshev was down. In the past things between him and I have not been easy [Desalle was injured in a collision with the Russian at a Belgian Championship race in 2011 then Bobryshev suffered a broken leg in another coming together in Italy last year] but I saw him on the floor and I just thought 'because of this sh\*t track the riders are going down hard'. It means pain and it is not good and not nice for the sport."

"Looking at some of the jump take-offs... [gestures disbelief]. There was a double at the top and on every lap I pushed into it and thought 'I hope everything will be okay here'... When you start to say this to yourself then you know things are not well. I know it is a dangerous sport and you cannot take all the risks away but I would like to say that I hope they [MXGP overseers] think about the riders' safety a bit more and minimise those risks."

**DBR:** It seems it might be heading that way. There is talk of more investment in track preparation and now Rui Gonçalves will be an official rider liaison...







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**CD:** "I hope so...but I also hope it is not a way for them to protect themselves. Like they are 'seen' to be doing something but nothing actually gets done. I think Rui is a really good guy for this type of roll so let's see what he will do."

**DBR:** After the operation you must have had a strange winter. For the last six years it has been the same people and same routine with Suzuki and now for the second time in your career there was a big change...

**CD:** "Of course...but for me negotiations for 2016 started very early. I knew that Kawasaki wanted me for quite a long time and Suzuki wanted to keep me. It was not a decision I made in, say, two days. I was thinking about it a lot, but I also didn't want to! I wanted to keep concentrating on my riding because that was most important."

"In the end you simply have to consider

your future. I had two options and like I say sometimes – "you know what you sell...but you don't know what you buy". Sometimes you buy something better, sometimes the same, sometimes worse. In the end I followed my feeling, and I looked at the balance of a new bike, new challenge, new people and with a good guy I know in the team. I have worked with Francois [Lemariey, Team Manager] in the past and I know him.

"On the other hand I had the same team, same bike and, well, not really the same people in the end! [in reference to Stefan Everts' takeover as new General Manager of Suzuki]. I looked at all sides and decided to change. I wanted to test some new things and in the end I hope I have bought something better!

"As a rider you also have to bring something to the package. You need to work on it to make it good. You cannot just jump on a new bike and take off. At the moment I am working on it.

[pauses] I would not say that this has given me extra motivation because I am always motivated for my sport and also because it was going very well with Suzuki but I wanted to try a new bike and keep feeling fresh. It sounds stupid but when you have a new bike it makes you feel cool, happy and excited. It is this feeling I was looking for. That was mainly why I moved."

**DBR:** I've seen you ride quickly on a Honda and a Suzuki. So what does a Kawasaki feel like?

**CD:** "When you look at a video of 2009 [his sole year on a Honda] then I think you can see that MXGP has improved! I think we are going much faster. I was fast on those bikes but I also felt good the first times on the Kawasaki. I was also coming back from injury and had to be careful and take it easy. There were some changes to deal with but my first impression was of a good bike and good base. As with every bike you have to personalise it and make it your way. >>





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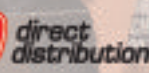
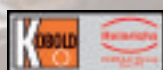
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I have a certain style and way I want the bike but I see potential there."

**DBR:** One of the biggest question marks in 2016 for many MXGP fans will be your speed on the Kawasaki and whether you can arrive to the same level. I'm sure you have similar thoughts...

**CD:** "It's true, and it's normal. I have never raced a Kawasaki so we will see. I will do the best I can."

**DBR:** Will it be important to keep calm in the first races and build into the season? That we should not expect too much right away?

**CD:** "Exactly. I think I have enough experience to tell myself this and I will take the time I need. If it goes well immediately then great. MXGP starts so early now and you have a short winter. I know I can still improve during 2016 and there is the fact that we have a new Kawasaki

KX450F – the team also have to learn about it. There is a lot of work to be done but I chose this challenge."

**DBR:** It was exactly a year ago that I heard another person talking about things being 'new' and that was Romain Febvre. Many people wanted to know why and how he won that championship. I think he found a good setting, good crew and then built confidence and just took-off. That's the magic formula isn't it?

**CD:** "Sure, I'm searching for that too! Like I mentioned that was part of the reason to change – to try and find another package to give me a bit 'extra'. The character of a new bike might fit my style better. It could go well...it could be worse. I'm searching."

**DBR:** Some riders don't like – or want to take – that risk. For example Tony Cairoli has been working with Claudio de Carli since 2004...

**CD:** "Well, I've decided to take the risk. I want to improve. So many things are changing for me. The only things staying the same are my helmet and goggle brands...and my knee braces!"

**DBR:** And you are wearing a new cap...

**CD:** [smiles] "I'm really excited about being a Monster Energy rider because in the past I was with an energy drink but it was just part of a team deal and I didn't have anything to do with this company. Now it is very different and I am a Monster athlete. I heard about their philosophy and it was just something where I thought 'cool'. They look like an easy-going company and I like how they see and treat their athletes. It's a nice brand and something to be excited about."

**DBR:** What about a strategy for the championship? I remember in 2011 you won >>



*Clement looks right at home on the Kawasaki*



something like three from the first five rounds whereas say last year you were very consistent and only missed the podium once from the first seven GPs but missed a race victory. Can it get confusing to know how to tackle a championship and treat the bigger picture?

**CD:** "Yeah, last winter I actually had that 2011 season in my head and the feeling during the first rounds of 2015 were the same...sadly both championships finished the same way! It was bad. That's the risk of the sport and no need to look back on it."

"It is difficult to answer that question and to know whether to attack directly or improve over the course of the races. I think it is something that comes automatically and it depends on how you feel at that time and that moment. In 2014 the first GP in Qatar did not go like I wanted and it was a bad weekend for me but into the second half of the season I was just 18 points behind Antonio."

"The start of the season in 2014 was not as good as 2015 but it started going in a decent way. So, it is a good question but every year is different and we'll see what comes this time. I want to prepare myself the best way and so that the bike will answer every demand I have of it."

**DBR:** Do you make MXGP exciting?

**CD:** "Erm, on the bike – yes. When you look at the previous years then I have always been 'there' and with a lot of top threes and three times runner-up. When you make these results then perhaps I am important in the championship but to really answer your question maybe 'no'. I don't think I am arrogant. I don't like to put myself at the front of the show."

**DBR:** So you are only a star when you are on the bike...

**CD:** "That's a good way to put it. Off the bike? Hmm. I think with social media sometimes riders make themselves important for the public, they show all sorts of things and it is all 'blah, blah'. I don't really like this. I like to race. I like to ride a bike. I appreciate that there needs to be a balance because I know it is important to fill the role of a professional rider but I just don't like to be an actor. This is racing. I don't want to change myself or my personality just because I do a job at a high level. When I stop the engine and I take my helmet off I want to stay myself. When things aren't going my way or I am not happy with my race or something

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went wrong then I am not afraid to show it. I'm not scared to reveal my real feelings and maybe sometimes people do not understand that."

**DBR:** So you need to take a championship and you need that 20th GP win but...is that all? I remember Jean-Michel Bayle saying that aside from the titles he just wanted someone to say that he was riding so good and so perfectly. Are you about 'the numbers' or is it important that some kid might see you leading everyone at Bastogne [site of the Belgian GP where he won in 2013] and be inspired...

**CD:** "That's really nice to think about. Sometimes with my Dad, just being at home together walking the dog or something, we talk about it. I love that feeling of riding well, racing good and being fast: of being 'there'. I like the example from Jean-Michel Bayle, that's important, but at the same time I'm working to win, you know? Every time I go to the gate then it's for that. I don't race just to do well."

**DBR:** So everything then...

**CD:** "Yes! Both. It is nice to have your own style and that somebody likes it."

RED!





# SHAUN SIMPSON

## Why Shaun Simpson is still aiming for the peak of MXGP

Words by Adam Wheeler Photos by Ray Archer

**A**n air of the underdog is finally beginning to evaporate from Shaun Simpson. A rider who has seemingly fought some form of adversity (food allergies, a lack of belief by others, brief factory chances, a team misfit, privateer status) ever since the brutal leg break that disrupted his moment at the big time in 2009 while a fresh-faced MX2 athlete in the works Red Bull KTM crew. Simpson has extolled the by-gone virtues of the sport in the past two years in what was largely a two-man band in the homely Hitachi set-up – him and his dad winning races repeatedly in the UK and throwing rocks without a sling against the goliaths of MXGP.

The 27 year old has proved his doubters wrong. He was unbeaten in Britain in 2015 and became only the second rider from this country to win a Grand Prix in the premier class of the FIM World Championship since 2001 (if we count the 250s as 'MXGP'). With three GP victories in MXGP he holds a notable distinction as the UK's most successful athlete and has evolved his sand capabilities to be considered as one of the very best in the world through the terrain.

Spoils: check. Validation: check. Success the 'hard way': check. So what now? With factory assistance through Steve Turner's Wilvo Virus Performance KTM team Simpson finally has the tools and the treatment – not forgetting the experience, maturity and know-how – to sit in his most prosperous position since Yamaha decided to bounce him around Steve Dixon and Michele Rinaldi's factory outfits in 2012.

'24' has faced questions repeatedly throughout his career (like most high-profile competitors) but

many MXGP observers will be curious to see if he can get even better and elevate further that rigid approach to consistency while maintaining a firm 'bigger picture' of racing and Grand Prix, namely 'lasting the distance'. After asking Shaun to bring his training clobber to an identifiable Scottish landscape and visually trying to encapsulate his preparation and attitude for 2016 and arguably his most important season yet, we got him behind the Dictaphone.

**DBR:** Okay, so, the big question: Did Shaun Simpson arrive at a peak in 2015 or is there more to come?

**SS:** "I think there is definitely more to come."

**DBR:** Well, I guess you would say that...

**SS:** "Yeah! But I finally feel that I have the evidence to back it up because – as I always say in interviews – I have been a slow-burner and I just get better with experience. I've managed to win the British Championship the last two years and I think the way I did it last season was very convincing. I feel that I can do it again and after two good years I'm still building up."

"It's to do with momentum and you just keep adding to it. I'm talking about fitness and speed and the general lack of a major break or disruption to the schedule. In GPs I've gone from 11th to seventh to fourth and I know to beat fourth in the world is going to be a hard task."

"However, if I strip back 2015 and look at how the first half of my season went then there is heaps of room for improvement. If I can raise-up my whole season then we will see again where we >>>



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*After an off-season full of self discovery Shaun now classes himself as an athlete*

finish. Whether it is better than fourth place could be a whole other story. I have better tools to go racing, better machinery and a better structure behind me. I feel I can go out there and do a good professional job rather than being handed the tools to do just a job."

**DBR:** You could perhaps say you are hitting maximum output in the sand – winning two out of the three sandy Grands Prix is a pretty damn good ratio. Even going undefeated in the UK was special. Your head must be in the best place yet for your career...

**SS:** "I think you have to be mentally strong and look at the year as a whole, and not crumble if one race goes wrong. Between MXGP and the 'British' I'll have 26 weekends of racing and of course not all of them are going to go right for me – even if the first few don't go well then there is little point crying and instead work on where you are weak. 2016 is my third year on a KTM and I'm on the same bike that I ended the '15 season. I feel that I am so much further ahead than I should be or would have been. I am in such a good position and I'm comfortable, confident and strong. I want the results I feel I can achieve."

**DBR:** I know it is some way-off and that you have to get through the opening stages of the '16 season but a weak point for you is finishing a championship year. Crashes and problems affected you in the last rounds of both 2014 and 2015...

**SS:** "It is frustrating for me to look at those stats because I pride myself on finishing races, motos and qualifying laps and finishing them strong. In both years things were going so well. In 2014 I had climbed up to fifth in the championship before the

crash in Brazil and last year I had the podium in Mexico before it all went to sh\*t at the last round. The Nations also! They were bad races but they could have happened at any point in the season. You have to take the rough-with-the-smooth, analyse the reasons why a race went wrong and get over it. You cannot be dragging low points like that around with you."

**DBR:** On a positive note it is hard to remember a GP where you struggled or faded and that must be a testament to your fitness...

**SS:** "And a testament to the experience I've picked up over the last three or four seasons. I've tailored my programme to the knowledge I have accumulated in my career. Together with my trainer Kev from Step1 Fitness – who has customised such a good programme – we are looking to go even better and take profit of the better structure I have."

"Now I just have to arrive at the track, do my job and then go home and carry on doing my job instead of worrying about building a bike or organising travel or equipment carnets. I'm taking that side of it to the next level by recovering, sleeping and eating better this year. Everything is on another level. Overall I think I have made big steps this winter and I'm excited to see where I am when it comes to being on the race track."

**DBR:** But you were working hard before...is it really that simple to push harder?

**SS:** "I think so. Look at Ryan Dungey and Ken Roczen with Aldon Baker – it is about teaching yourself what works for you and being disciplined. It sounds a bit far-fetched but you have to make every day on this earth count towards an end goal. >>







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Every meal, every early night, every work-out – it is the little things that turn out to make a big difference. Finding someone who can guide you in the right direction helps. I've actually drafted in two-three people to help me this year and I am mentally stronger for how it is all coming together and contributing."

**DBR:** Judging by the photo shoot it seems like Scott have really hooked you up for 2016 training. A handy advantage with a firm renowned for their goggles but then mountain, ski sports and bikes...

**SS:** "It's my second year with Scott and I'm blown away by the quality to be honest. From the eyewear to the apparel I would say they are every bit as good as a brand like Oakley. For the goggles the whole manufacturing process, the glue, the rubbers and material are all top-quality – they do such a good job. One of the best things is that they are always aspiring for better. They want feedback, they want tests, they make reports – if you do your own modification to the goggle then they want to know why and whether it is something they can work into the production."

"The road bikes, mountain bikes, running shoes, compression wear – it feels like nothing is bereft of thought or careful design. The bike in particular has a set of components that just fit together well and work in harmony. You won't get frustrated by problems when you are trying to train because some bikes with a decent spec just don't work as well as they should."

**DBR:** Speaking of 'harmony', I remember you looking more into sport psychology during the latter part of 2015. I imagine it is something you don't want to discuss the details of too much but what is it all about and what effect is it having? Were you sceptical?

**SS:** "People can be judgemental but I can say that I am working on areas of being a Pro rider that I hadn't before. Of course I was – and am – sceptical about it. I'm 27 years old and I have been doing Grands Prix for 11 years and have had some amazing results but everyone else there in MXGP is looking for that extra little edge. If this is what it takes for me to get that tiny advantage over the rest of the paddock then so be it and I'm pretty sure nobody else has been doing the things I have done this off-season. It might not involve raw speed or fitness but it is about being mentally resolute behind the gate and knowing you are prepared for those two motos across 18 rounds and six months. Knowing that you have done everything you can for these races gives you confidence. No stone unturned."

**DBR:** Any examples? Like, say, linguistic programming and saying to yourself over and over "I will get a good start"...

**SS:** "Yeah, there are things like that but it is more of a process of re-programming your mind. Stripping back everything that you think or may have thought about your racing and your habits. It is then about finding and working on your weaknesses."

"Everyone knows where they are strong but it was quite interesting for me to find out where I was struggling mentally and it was with things that I never expected. So you break that down and build it up in the right way with certain techniques that you can do in the morning or before and after training sessions."

"Writing things down, keeping diaries and being much more professional about it. I would be happy to tell someone that I'm a Pro athlete now, whereas in the past I've been a guy that has achieved success and told people that I was a 'motorbike rider'. Now I am living like an athlete and that has come from these techniques. It takes about a month to break a habit and once you've done it then you don't want to turn back. I feel like a changed man!"

**DBR:** So what would a weakness have been before? Routine?

**SS:** "Massively. My routine before was not good enough. It was up-and-down and sleep patterns were sh\*t, general habits and the process of getting my body ready for a weekend of racing. There has to be a structure and I don't know the correct terminology for it all at the moment! You have to get your body into a state so that it knows when it is 'go-time' and to get everything out of it; these techniques are helping with that and it is all backed up with stats and research and athletes in other sports are doing this stuff. It is nothing new...but new to me. I want to be able to podium at any given GP this year and not just the sand or soft terrain races so I've been in Spain and Italy already getting that blue groove practice."

**DBR:** You jumped out of the KTM factory team at the end of 2010. Do you think it is fair to say that your ties with the manufacturer now are the strongest they have been since that time, especially considering you were their top MXGP rider in 2015...

**SS:** "Yeah definitely. I feel like I have done a great job for KTM in the last two years, let's say. I've always been a bit on the backburner for them and was never really in the limelight, even when I was on the factory bike at the end of the season. I didn't feel too much pressure from them but also that they weren't overly pumped with what I was doing."

>>



Steps used to be one of Shaun's favourite bands but now he's grown to really dislike them





"I am just happy that they make resources available. They don't throw it at you but if you ask the right people in the right way and go about things professionally then there is stuff available to get to the next level. That's what excites me about KTM – whether you've bought a stock bike or you're factory supported or a full factory rider there always feels like there is more you can tap into. You need to know what you want, test properly and make the right decisions because the higher up the tree you go there are more decisions to make.

"It comes down to rider preference. I think this is where Cairoli went wrong in 2015. He didn't make the right decisions and was caught in an early part of the season questioning himself over whether the others had stepped it up, he was struggling or he needed a change of bike. He seemed to be in turmoil for a little while over the 450 and eventually got injured.

"Guys like Max Nagl, for instance, came into the season very strong mentally having done his work and with a great feeling on the bike. When the 2016 model came in then he was strong enough to say: "I don't want that set-up, I'm going to run this and then test in the winter". Not everyone likes that type of approach but you have to appreciate that the guy sitting on the seat knows what he wants. If you get a team around you that support you 100 per cent and you don't take the piss by getting them running around in circles then you build something together.

"I feel good in the position I have with KTM and Steve Turner's team and if I ask for something they try to make it happen. I don't know how the link with the factory will be once the season starts and it is a bit like we are doing our own thing at the moment. We'll see if it changes but I think we are capable enough as a team to really hone our own package."

**DBR:** Leading up to Qatar then your name it is likely to be seen in articles associated with factory status. But what does that mean? Will you have the same 450s as Cairoli and Coldenhoff?

**SS:** "I don't know exactly and maybe I am talking out of turn but so far all I have been given is a large black box with an engine in it. For factory components and titanium parts like Tony and Glenn would have then – at the moment – those are not there. I currently have the same as any KTM-supported rider but a works engine as well. I don't know if I can expect more. There are different guys at the factory who have different ideas on what I will be receiving so it is quite a difficult question to answer at the moment."

**DBR:** You're not really a privateer any more, no more Willie Simpson on the spanners and a wedding to look forward to in October. 2016 is set to be a bit of a life-changer isn't it?

**SS:** "It is! I can only say that things have slotted into place really well. I've come off the back of two great seasons with Roger's [Magee] Hitachi team and working closely with my dad I think that people should have the upmost respect for what we have managed to achieve. My dad always told me that he would step-down or head back home when he felt that I'd be going to a team that would cater for me correctly. When I started talking with Steve then I made it clear that I wanted the proper support structure. My dad was turning 60 and I was searching for the right facilities like a race and practice mechanic and the capability to concentrate solely on myself.

"Rachel has made a life-changing decision to come out to Belgium with me and our relationship is good and strong. We've been away from Scotland for a few weeks now and my parents seem very happy. Steve has provided me with an environment that is pretty much the same as factory. There might be some works riders that don't have it as good as I do!

"So, big changes...but all these points are positive. I'll miss my dad at some point but these are changes for my future and they had to happen eventually. I want to get married and start a family and it was the perfect time for it all to come together. I think the timing of things was something I worried about in the past."

**DBR:** In the last two years you seemed to become a journeyman racer. You'd pop up in Belgian and Dutch internationals as well as

GPs and British Championship dates. In 2015 you added an AMA National and the Lille Supercross! Will you keep that kind of scheduling?

**SS:** "I don't know really but I cannot imagine changing things too much. I've tailored my profession to keeping busy. I like to go to these obscure places and you never know whom you will meet. It is easy to stay indoors, miss races and worry about injury.

"You and I have had a few conversations about Lille and the risks involved with suddenly doing supercross but I have honestly not had as much fun at a race outside of the world championship in years! I had an absolute blast and went home from an event where people questioned whether I could ride well and whether I should be taking the risk to feeling like I had really 'lived'. I had ticked that one off the list and I'd happily sign up for it next year. It was great, a great atmosphere. Such hype.

"Stuff like Unadilla widened my reach and gave me exposure to a lot of new people. It is so easy to narrow down your sport to one thing but you might look back at your career and think 'that was boring'. Why not mix it up and do things that excite you...?"

**DBR:** So a honeymoon could involve the Monster Energy Cup?

**SS:** "Haha, actually the biggest obstacle at the moment with the finale of the season and my wedding – which I am looking forward to immensely – is that the Manufacturer's Cup has now been scheduled the same weekend."

**DBR:** No representation for KTM there then...

**SS:** "No chance..."

**DBR:** What about moving from one (ex) KTM team to another? A bit controversial perhaps?

**SS:** "I think the best way to put this is that every team in the paddock has the same right to talk to me...as they would do for any other rider. If someone can put together a package that interests me then there is no harm in talking. If I get an offer in black-and-white with terms and conditions for a ride then others also get a chance to match or better it – that's how contracts work.

"I don't think you should see it as me leaving one KTM team for another but rather just one team to another. I think there was quite a difference between my old team and my new one in terms of the structures behind them for the rider. The number one thing a team can look to is their rider because he is the guy on the track getting results for the sponsors that the team can bring in. It is as simple as that for me. Steve put in black-and-white what he could do for me and there was time for anybody else to come in and present me with the same. It is not personal. Without Roger setting up the team and then giving me the last two years I might not be where I am today...but without my dad supporting me I could say the same thing."

**DBR:** Lastly, is it hard to keep motivated for another British title? You backed up the title in 2014 with a perfect season. How about going to the line with the same intensity?

**SS:** "There is only one way to better 2015 and that's to win every moto! I lost three last year and I have to try and better that. I know there are a couple of other riders coming into the series but the team are supplying me with the tools to do a job and I honestly think I can get the job done again.

"Four times British Champion" will look good on the CV, so would 'five times' actually. The British championship for me is hectic but I'm pleased they have gone back to the two race format and it won't be so hurried. It is also a good opportunity for the fans to see you. Racing is about fans. If they don't go home motivated and buy parts and clothing then we wouldn't have sponsorship, teams and racing.

"You have to give something back and I think I've been quite smart there with the 'Simpson Army' and put effort into things whereby people feel they can come along and watch somebody that appreciates them. I'm happy to do that and feel like I am putting on a show for the people who enjoy watching and supporting you. That's what I am trying to do with the 'British'."





I pride myself on finishing races, motos and qualifying laps and finishing them strong. ””



## The Boss's View

### Sitting down with Steve Turner

Simpson might have needed the confines of the Wilvo Virus Performance KTM team to make an upgrade in his racing but Steve Turner's crew also required the staying power and potential of a top rider in order to resurrect their plight into the upper echelons of motocross. Healthy links with KTM have more to do with Turner's attitude and dedication than it does with the results of his squad's efforts so far.

Adam Sterry gave them credence in the European Championship but misfortune with Jake Nicholls and misjudgement with Jonathan Barragan and Steven Frossard leaves WVPK still searching for some relevance in Grand Prix. We asked Steve about the Simpson signing and what it might mean...

**DBR:** 2016 and Shaun wants to step up another level. In your opinion how can he do that and what will he find/have in your team to make that rise?

**ST:** "Shaun is brilliant to work with, he's spent a number of years pretty much looking after himself with his dad Willie and now has a wealth of knowledge regarding the bike and the set-up he wants. It's our job to give him everything he needs in terms of the bike and all-round support. He no longer has to work on his own bike, organise and collect parts, pack his own crate for the overseas etc and instead can concentrate on planning his weeks out and preparing properly for every race. I want him to sit on that start line and know he's giving nothing away to the guys on either side in terms of the machinery he's sitting on, the kit he's wearing, his physical conditioning and his state of mind."

**DBR:** In 2015 he established himself with two wins and another podium. Is he one of the protagonists in MXGP now? A valuable cast member?

**ST:** "I sincerely hope so. He's proved he can beat the best fair and square and his confidence is high going into the new season."

**DBR:** Is Shaun arguably the rider with the most potential nationally and internationally and in terms of profile that you've had on the team?

**ST:** "Yes for sure, especially after last season. He's a true professional and has built up a strong following. He's highly respected inside and outside the paddock for what he's achieved."

**DBR:** Is the team ready to try and push its status and maybe even that of the sport with the British Champion onboard?

**ST:** "We'll be doing our best. Hopefully we'll get the results that we've been missing from Shaun and Adam and should elevate the team to a higher level."







# THE TRAVELLING MAN!

FROM RUSSIA TO THE USA –  
THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NOWHERE IN THE  
WORLD WHERE SCRAMBLING ACE CHRIS  
HORSFIELD WOULDN'T RACE...

Words by Andy Westlake

**T**he scene is the Russian steppes in the early summer of 1966 and the lights from a hundred camp fires glint out across the endlessly flat landscape. A huge caravan of gypsies has pulled up for the night and their camp is alive with dancing and the aroma of freshly cooking food. Among the travellers are four faces who are unmistakably those of 'foreigners' – two Brits and a pair of Swedes.

You might be forgiven for thinking this is a plot from a spy movie however the Romany's guests are not secret agents but a quartet of international motocross riders – Chris Horsfield, Jerry Scott, Rolf Tibblin and his fellow countryman Per-Olaf Persson. They're on their way to the Russian GP and frustrated by their Soviet minders' sluggish rate of progress have decided to press on independently. Remember it's the height of the Cold War so four westerners on their own behind the Iron Curtain would almost be enough to trigger an international incident!

The roads across the barren steppes are straight and boring, so faced with a dearth of a suitable cafés and hotels they opt to join the surprised gypsy folk – a meal of roast goat and a night under the stars the reward for Horsfield and co. Chris laughed as he recalled the incident although his memory was tinged with some sadness as just a few weeks later his close friend and travelling companion Jerry Scott was tragically killed while racing in the North Vs South scramble at Thirsk.

By 1966 CZ mounted Chris had become an established works rider and courtesy of his success in the Grandstand and World of Sport TV scrambles a household name.

His racing career started in 1957 on a BSA B32 but racing motorbikes was not Chris' first ambition. "I was brought up in the era of great racing drivers like Fangio and as a young boy dreamed of following in his footsteps. My mother and father were friendly with the Moss family and I remember a fantastic day when we were all invited along to Silverstone where Stirling and Mike Hawthorn were testing.

"In his yellow polka dot Dickie bow Mike Hawthorn was a great character and as I soon discovered a great practical joker, especially where Moss was concerned. Stirling came back into the pits and said he couldn't believe how narrow the track seemed in the area controlled by cones but what he didn't know was that Hawthorn had been closing them up and before he had pitted he'd opened them up again.

"Moss said that the car was so easy to drive a kid could do it so Mike, who scoffed at the notion wagered him £10 on it – as I was the only kid I was stuck behind the wheel of the Formula One car and on my first ever drive won Moss the bet! I told him I wanted to become a racing driver but his answer was 'forget it unless you've got plenty of money'. It was then I decided I would opt for two wheels instead of four."

The young Chris soon became the proud owner of an old James – a machine on which he learnt the art of off-road control although it also earned him a ticking off from the long arm of the law.

"I was 14 and riding the James through the lanes to the fields. Normally this was fine but one day I came upon a police roadblock – somebody had done a runner from the nearby asylum and they were out looking for him.

It was obvious I wasn't old enough to be on the road so they turned me round and followed me back home in the police car. I thought I would be nicked but because they'd told me to ride it home it would have been seen as aiding and abetting so I was let off with some finger wagging and a stern lecture."

At 16 Chris started work on a farm and the James was pensioned off – the little two-stroke replaced by a B31 BSA which he rode to watch his first scramble.

"Rob and Sam Cooper and I went to watch the scramble at Knowlsworth, a top line event which featured people like >>



John Draper, Geoff Ward, Brian Stonebridge and a young chap called Jeff Smith. I just couldn't believe how fast they were going.

"It was there and then I decided to be a scrambler although Sam and Rob thought that I was joking when I said I gave myself three years to become a professional rider. It's not surprising that they laughed because at that time there were very few able to earn a living wage from racing motorbikes."

At this stage Chris had never even sat on a scrambler let alone ridden one but not to be deterred he soon had his first bike – a BSA B32 which cost £150.

"The BSA dealer in Stratford was surprised when I told him I wanted to buy the B32 and kept reminding me that it was a competition bike and I wouldn't be able to ride it on the road. I couldn't kick it over let alone start it but when he realised I was serious allowed me £30 on the B31 and the rest I took up on hire purchase at £1 a month."

In his state of 'must have it' Chris had given little consideration to how he might get the Goldie home so with no transport available the only option was to push it the three and a half miles from the centre of Stratford! It transpired that the Goldie had previously been raced by Ron Langston so it was an optimistic Chris who in 1957 lined up for his first race.

"The Cooper brothers and I had decided to pool our resources and we'd bought an ex-army A40 pick-up truck. It was a bit of a heap and before we could drive it away we had to weld the doors up, this meant that the only way to get in was through the windows! We then discovered that of its three gears it was only first and top which selected but amazingly it got us to my first meeting at Kimber Edge near Stourbridge."

After he disappeared through a hedge Chris' debut race ended in retirement however on his second outing of the afternoon he gave a hint of his potential when he brought the Goldie home fifth in a race won by Bull Baraugh on the works DOT.

"I rode in about five events during the latter half of '57 and I fell off more than I stayed on – it was certainly a lot harder than I could possibly have imagined".

Farm workers pay was pitifully poor and for Chris it was hard to finance his passion for scrambling. His 5/s entry fee, petrol and bike upkeep all had to be paid for by a weekly wage of £3.00. It probably comes as little surprise to learn that by 1958 he had left the farm and was working in a local garage run by the Bollom family – the change of vocation hastened when he crashed his former employer's tractor though a hedge.

He was getting on the pace but due to its huge carburettor the Goldie had little in the way of bottom-end power. Once under way it went like the wind but invariably Chris was last away which meant playing catch up – youthful over exuberance resulting in the almost inevitable crash. 1958 was an eventful year and for much of the time he was either dicing for the lead or falling off but the following season a new bike soon brought its rewards.

"If I was going to reach my three year goal of becoming a works rider I had to have a decent bike or pack up. I decided to put my money where my mouth was and bought myself a brand new B34 Gold Star which cost a whopping £378. I soon started winning and it was a fantastic year for prize money and silverware. By then I was travelling to events as far afield as Derbyshire and Wales in a shared van with Bonzo Harris and Terry Player who acted as mechanic."

From his earliest days Chris has kept carefully chronicled records of his career and they reveal that in that 1959 season he was winning about £30 a week in prize money. A decent return when you consider the average wage was then about £10! His riding ability was starting to get him noticed and he was chosen to compete in the annual Oxford versus Cambridge scramble.

"It was a great honour to be chosen for the Oxford side, I had a good event and although I didn't win I managed to beat Brian Stonebridge although he was riding a 197cc Greeves and I was on a 500cc BSA. I'd been racing two and a half seasons and really thought I'd made it but was brought down to earth the following year.

"1960 turned out to be a bit of a nightmare and I was forever crashing – one was so bad it bent the Goldie's frame. It needed replacing so we stripped it down and my dad took it on the bus to BSA where competition chief Bert Perigo gave him a new one."

He soon returned to his winning ways and attracting the eyes of a sponsor. "A chap in Coventry invited me to ride a TriBSA and a Greeves Hawkstone which was my first two-stroke. I just couldn't get on with the power delivery of the Triumph twin engine and only

rode it once. I landed from a jump and the jolt must have done something to the carb because when I shut the throttle back it was spitting so badly it caught fire and I had to bale off at around 50 mph."

He may not have liked the TriBSA but he took to the little Greeves like a duck to water and on his first outing won a snowy TV scramble in Derbyshire. Although getting to the venue was not without its problems.

"Bob and Sam were due to pick me up at 6.00am on the Saturday morning but overnight there had been a heavy snowfall so the lane to my village was impassable. I loaded up my kit bag and started pushing the Greeves but the drifts were too deep so the only option was to start it. It was fitted with one of those flat megaphones so as you can imagine it was horrendously noisy riding it through the village. We eventually loaded up but the A40 didn't have a heater and because of the treacherous going we only arrived in time to do one lap of practice. Despite this I quickly adapted to the snow and surprised myself winning the first TV race."

Sadly before he could taste the fruit of further success the sponsor went bust so once more Chris was without a bike to ride. This was short lived and soon he was lined up to ride the ex-Ron Langston works Ariel – a bike bought by Bert Lavis after Langston had retired with a back injury.

"My first event on the Ariel was another TV scramble and it was a revelation after my Gold Star. It was light and went like a rocket ship although it didn't handle as well as the BSA. The peaty going was just to my liking and in the race I finished second to Jeff Smith."

It was one of Smith's first races against the young Horsfield and on arrival back in the pits is reported to have asked 'who is that mad little bugger?'

Again the association with the Ariel was short lived – after four or five races Chris landed from a jump and on impact the frame broke in half.

"It split at the head and I cart wheeled down the track – I've still got the tyre marks on my back to prove it. It went back to Selly Oak to have a new frame fitted but while it was there they took out all of the good bits so on its return it was just a stock and rather uncompetitive bike."

For a while Chris considered retiring but again lady luck intervened in the form of Norman Houghton. Norman was the competition manager for Lodge plugs and invited Chris to ride and help develop a bike he was involved in. After meeting Norman, Chris agreed to ride the bike although at that stage it hadn't even been built!

"A few weeks later I got a call to say that it was ready so the first time I actually saw the bike was on the Sunday I turned up to race it. It had a 197cc Villiers engine, a small section 3.50 rear tyre and looked more like a road bike than a scrambler! I raced it two or three times but it was absolutely dreadful.

"Then out of the blue I got a phone call from Bob Bicknell who was the sales manager for James and Francis Barnett. He told me there was a position available at James and it was mine if I was interested. I was still working in the garage on a wage of about £7 a week so James' offer of £11 seemed like riches in comparison. It involved a round trip of 40 miles but I decided to take it."

Chris spent the first two weeks working in the underground workshop building wheels, welding and road testing but he then got a call to go to the comp shop. James had been hoping to sign Sammy Miller to help develop the Commando trials bike but for reasons unclear this didn't happen so Chris was invited to develop and ride the scrambler.

"I was working with Eddie Kees who was a brilliant mechanic and could make virtually anything. Two-stroke tuning was still a bit of an unknown art so we experimented with the Villiers engine padding the crankcases and fitted a Parkinson conversion which got it going really well. Although we didn't realise it at the time it was the infancy of the Starmaker engine."

Much to their surprise Chris and the James started winning although between races the bike was totally stripped and rebuilt for the following weekend. And it turned out it wasn't just the bike that was stripped down!

"The James machine shop was largely run by women and like something out of the 1930s with huge machines driven by exposed belts. I was starting to get some good results and on my way to the comp shop the women would sometime whistle or shout out. However, one day I was aware that the whole room had an eerie quietness about it. Before I knew what was happening I was





THE  
TRAVELLING  
MAN



THE  
TRAVELLING  
MAN!





surrounded by a group of baying women who proceeded to strip all my clothes off and I had to run naked to the safety of the comp shop! Needless to say I didn't go that way again!"

Chris was perhaps not the most naturally gifted rider but what he lacked in skill he more than made up for in stamina and a typical day involved a three and a half mile run before he started work. He might have been a works rider but he still had to clock in at 8 o'clock every morning!

He was soon on the trail of the continental GPs but his championship ambitions met with little enthusiasm from his employers.

"We got the James going really well so I thought that the GPs was the natural progression but when I asked they said 'you'll have to pay for it yourself'. So I went ahead and managed to get a ride in the 1962 Swiss GP – this was my first trip abroad. Although I had to pay for it myself they let Bob Cooper go as my mechanic and we made the long two and a half day trip to Payerne along with journalist Chris Carter. Our 'race transport' was an old Ford Thames van which I bought for 30 quid and this also acted as our overnight accommodation."

At that time Horsfield was an unknown outside the UK although at the impromptu pre-race party he became the centre of attention.

"Jan was expecting and after about four laps of practice I was pulled off the track to receive a telegram announcing that Grant had been born. The Russians and Czechs threw a massive party to celebrate and with the help of Sten Lundin and Andy Lee I eventually managed to send a return telegram."

In the race Chris also did rather well and finished a creditable fifth despite having to ride half the race without a seat. His employers may not have given much in the way of encouragement or support for his trip to Payerne but later they sold 80 bikes to the Swiss importer as a result of his success! Throughout his career Chris had suffered a number of heavy crashes but undoubtedly one at Hawkstone in late '62 was the worst.

"Although the James didn't handle as well as the Greeves or BSA opposition the Starmaker engine was very quick and I was involved in a dice for the lead with Jeff Smith. We came out of the sandpit absolutely flat out onto the straight and the next thing I remember was waking up in bed. Apparently I got flipped off and collided with the fencing – it resulted in bruising to the brain and I had to stay in a darkened room for six weeks."

Not to be deterred Chris was soon back in the saddle although this time on a booming 500cc Matchless.

"Dave Curtis was retiring so they asked me if I'd like to take over his bike, as you can guess the answer was 'blimey, yeah!'. I think Hugh Viney looked upon it as his baby and before my first ride at Rolsworth he gave me strict instructions of 'don't crash and don't damage it! It didn't handle particularly well but the engine turned out the best part of 50bhp so it was an absolute rocket ship good for close on 100mph."

In addition to Dave Curtis, Geoff Ward and Gordon Blakeway were also coming to the end of their careers so Chris joined a new team which comprised of himself, Vic Eastwood and Dave Nicoll to fly the Matchless flag. It was something which for the next three years he achieved with great aplomb although Viney was ever watchful. After one race Chris found a note pinned to the bike which read 'change up or else!'

"They were fantastic days although riding in the GPs was very demanding. The season started in Austria and then went on to Monza in Italy. From there we would drive all the way up to Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany before coming home for six weeks. It might sound romantic but we had to drive thousands of miles and between races had to do all our own maintenance on the bikes and keep to our training schedule."

However, it was not all work and no play for the Brits chasing world championship honours and they did find time to let their hair down.

"After we'd raced in the Austrian GP we met an old guy who'd fought in the war but was now keen to celebrate peace and friendship with his former 'enemies'. A group of us including Jerry Scott and myself were invited to his home which, as it happened had a room licensed to sell home brewed wine and liquor. Around the room ran a 'dodo rail' and after a few (read several) glasses of schnapps the Austrian displayed his 'party trick' of running around it. By this time it was two o'clock in the morning and we'd all partied well but none of us including Jerry or myself could manage it – this was particularly frustrating because the Austrian was 80 if he was a day. I think it was another 20 years or more before I could face

another glass of red wine!"

The works Matchless was in Chris' words "like a rocket ship" but compared to the opposition massively heavy and the riders request to lighten things fell on deaf ears with Hugh Viney. However away from the bosses' prying eyes things did get done.

"A resourceful group of ex-Norton comp shop 'old boys' joined us from Bracebridge Street and no job was ever too much trouble or too difficult for them. We had special innards made for the front forks, electron brake plates, lightweight rockers and a clutch turned out of a solid billet of aircraft alloy. It shaved an amazing seven pounds off the weight of the standard clutch which had been struggling to deal with the engine's huge torque. It made the world of difference and when married up to a lightweight Swedish gearbox the bike fairly flew."

There was no disputing the bikes performance but around the paddocks there were murmurings that after its visits to the comp shop the half-litre single's displacement sometimes 'grew' an extra 100cc. Rumours which always led to tight lipped denial from comp shop bosses and never proven.

The Grand Prix riders were a close knit crowd and during the long season would often play host to their on track rivals between races, help with some chores the usual 'payment' although this was not the case in Sweden.

"We'd ridden in Finland – where I was horrified to pay £4 10s for breakfast – and before the Swedish round Rolf Tibblin invited me, Jerry Scott and his father Len to stay at his (Rolf's) family's home in Stockholm. Tibblin senior was a scrap metal man and told us that anyone who stayed in his house was welcome but were expected to work for their keep. I wasn't sure what he had in mind but we were woken at 5.30 in the morning and after breakfast put in a really long, hard day helping him to dismantle a huge road bridge over Stockholm harbour."

Ernie Wiffin had taken over as competition manager from Hugh Viney but all was not well with the AMC parent company and Chris was given the tipoff that he should start looking around for another ride. This was the back end of 1964 and BSA were celebrating Jeff Smith's 500cc world championship win on the lightweight 440 victor. It was a machine ideally suited to Chris' full-on riding style and after a meeting with Brian Martin it looked like he'd landed works bikes for '65, although it didn't quite turn out as planned.

"Brian Martin offered me a brace of works BSAs (250 and 500) for the 1965 season but a week before I was due to pick the bikes up pulled out of the deal."

The 'official' reason given for this change of plan was that 'Matchless and BSA had an agreement not to sign each other's riders'. However the feeling with those 'in the know' was that one of BSA's top riders viewed Horsfield as a serious threat to his own championship aspirations and simply didn't want him in the same team therefore vetoing his ride.

Struggling to get the best out of the Matchless, Chris had turned to the Rickman brothers and bought one of their frames to house the works engine although AMC themselves had also announced a 'new' machine.

"Derek Rickman had already shown that with a decent frame the Matchless could still be competitive so I got Bob Cooper to prepare it and fabricate some titanium engine plate's ready to slot the works engine straight in without interrupting my racing schedule."

As you can imagine it was a revelation after the works heavyweight and weighed in at 278lb! Matchless were also keen to show off their new scrambler which if nothing else certainly looked the business."

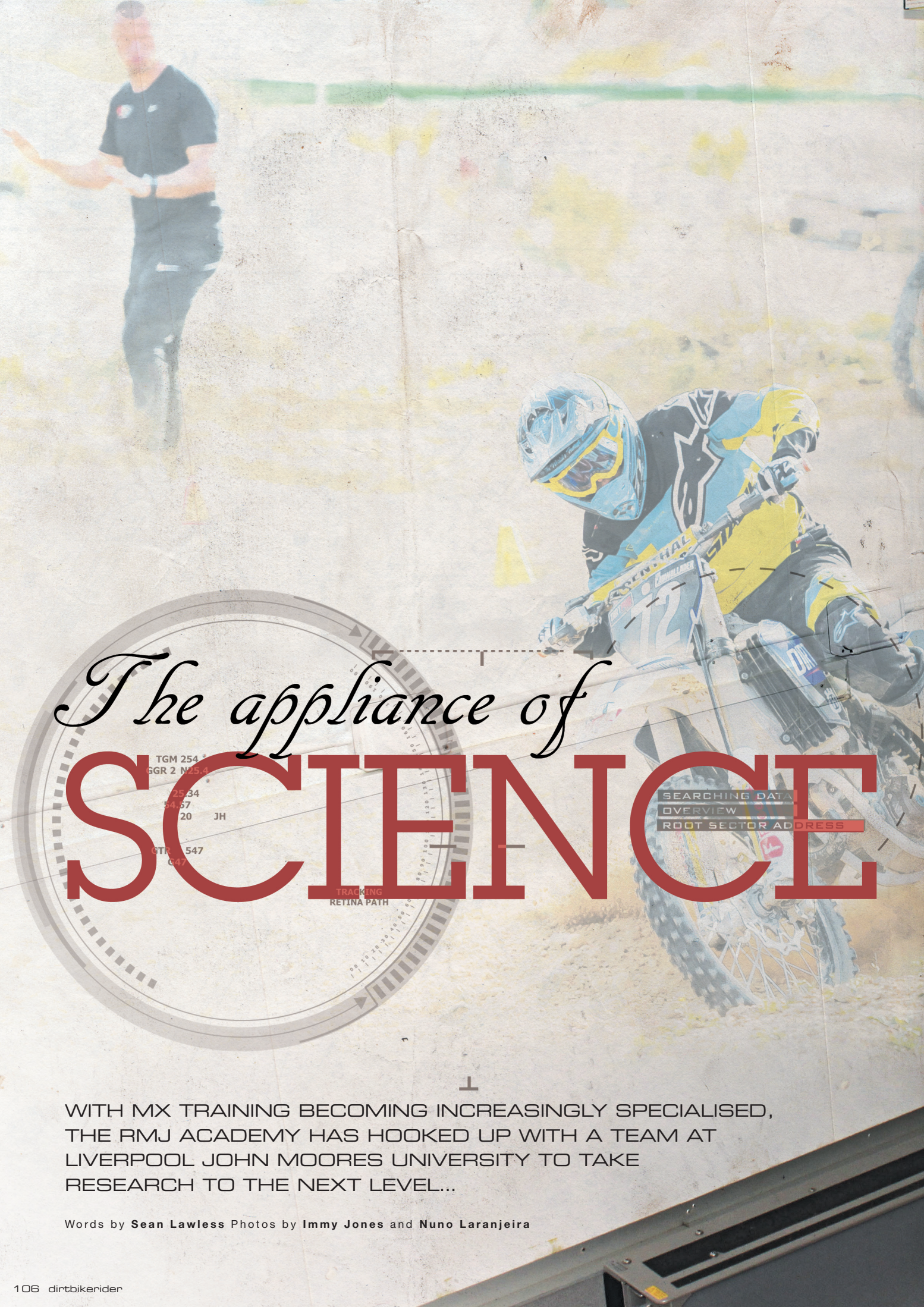
There was no denying its purposeful appearance but as Chris revealed design, testing and costing of the new machine left a lot to be desired.

"The frame had been designed around a chalk outline drawn on the floor at Woolwich and although it looked fantastic it didn't handle at all well and Vic Eastwood's father immediately went about cutting and modifying the rear end and steering head angle."

"It was wheeled out for the attendant press pack who made all the right sort of noises but when questioned how much it was going to cost Bill Smith passed it on to Ernie who replied 'got to be worth £279 of anybody's money'. I got the impression that up to that point there had been little or no thought given to the cost and it was figure which was just plucked out of the air!"

**Join us next month for the second part of the Chris Horsfield story that sees the scrambles superstar help develop Kawasaki's first off-road racer and later head to the USA...**





# *The appliance of* **SCIENCE**

WITH MX TRAINING BECOMING INCREASINGLY SPECIALISED, THE RMJ ACADEMY HAS HOOKED UP WITH A TEAM AT LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY TO TAKE RESEARCH TO THE NEXT LEVEL...

Words by **Sean Lawless** Photos by **Immy Jones** and **Nuno Laranjeira**









Adam Sterry's Bane impression had the John Moores University students in stitches...

**M**otocross is a sport that demands fitness – mental as well as physical – and there's a growing industry devoted to catering for a racer's mind and body. Up until now, certainly in the UK at least, there hasn't been an exhaustive, in-depth, long-term academic study into what top-flight riders go through during the course of a season – but that's all about to change.

A team at Liverpool John Moores University, in conjunction with the RMJ Academy, is devoting the next three years to studying the subject with 29-year-old sport nutrition expert Stephen Smith aiming to complete a PhD in motocross. Working alongside Stephen is Carl Langan-Evans, the university's Sport Science Support Officer, whose fields of expertise include strength and conditioning, sport training and sport physiology.

Before you dismiss them as white-coated boffins with big foreheads I should point out that Stephen is a passionate road racer whose ultimate ambition is to compete in the TT and 30-year-old Carl's a former taekwondo athlete who's still heavily involved in the sport as a high-performance coach. Basically, they both talk the talk and walk the walk.

An afternoon touring the university's facilities is an eye-opening experience. There are a lot of big words being bandied about but it's genuinely fascinating stuff. This is just about as far removed as it gets from the old-school 'run five miles, do some motos, drop and give me 20' approach – this is cutting-edge, heavyweight science.

I'm going to attempt to explain what's going on in layman's terms but before we get into the nitty gritty of how the John Moores team is conducting its research here's some background into how the study has come about along with its objectives.

Richard-Mike Jones needs little introduction to DBR readers. A racer turned trainer, he's guided GP competitor Adam Sterry since he rode autos and now has a pro stable that includes some of the country's brightest up-and-coming talents.

"The PhD study is a bit of a win-win for the RMJ Academy," says Rich-Mike. "Short-term we get a lot of testing done and find out where the pro athletes are at with their fitness and strength and long-term we find out what the specific demands of motocross are.

"Everyone within motocross is quick to say it's the hardest sport in the world but there's never been any studies done on, for example, what the fatigue factor is on muscles. There's never been evidence collected showing what's the best way to prepare for motocross as there has been for other sports like football or marathon running.

"This is a big step for the RMJ Academy and also a big step for motocross."

Rich-Mike originally approach LJMU for advice on nutrition but the project quickly snowballed.

"I met with a guy called Graeme Close who's a nutritionist to the England rugby team. In that meeting Stephen was sat with him and he asked 'how far do you want to go with this?' and my reply was 'as far as physically possible'."

With a background in trials and enduro, Stephen – from nearby Speke – has a keen interest in two-wheeled motorsport but until

now no involvement in motocross. With a Masters degree in sports nutrition already under his belt he was aiming to go on to do a PhD before he met Rich-Mike.

"Rich approached the uni and my supervisor suggested I should explain to him about the match-funded PhD options," says Stephen. "The way this works is that the RMJ Academy puts in some money and the university matches it on the understanding that we get the opportunity to do research and Rich gets the opportunity to do testing and get support with his riders.

"Essentially the aim of the PhD is to investigate what goes on when these lads are riding the bike during training and competition and look at the physiology of motocross.

"We'll have to do some sort of investigations and studies while they're on the bike. This could be through simple heart-rate monitoring, blood markers, how much movement they do on the bike and how much time they spend on the bike or off the bike when they're training.

"We have access to GPS accelerometers – these are basically vests that the lads will be wearing that have a sensor in them that measures how much movement they do, force, acceleration and how much distance they cover."

Although there have been studies conducted into the demands of motocross these are few and far between. Fortunately, LJMU has a huge amount of experience in sports science research and the team will draw upon this.

"We've got a vast array of experience in non-mainstream sports at John Moores so we've worked with jockeys, we've looked at combat sports but we've also got experience working in elite sports. So we're drawing on our knowledge from all these different areas and applying it to motocross.

"We'll be able to compare what it takes to become an elite motocross rider to what it takes to become an elite jockey or an elite cyclist or an elite rugby player or an elite football player. What we're trying to do is identify what adaptations or what characteristics make the elite riders stand out from the people who don't make it in the sport."

Nutrition and training practices will be formulated around the research with everything geared to optimising on-track performance.

"We're trying to take motocross to that next level. From what I've seen people who already work in the sport rely on their own experience to inform what they do with other riders – what we're trying to do is nail down the physiology of what goes on so we can actually use proven data to inform our practice.

"It's just amazing, it's my dream job. I've always been interested in motorbikes and I've always wanted to progress to PhD so when this opportunity came around I had to grab it. I'm pinching myself every day to make sure it's real."

For Carl the goal of the study is to develop "scientifically informed practice" and with a list of academic qualifications to his name including a PhD in exercise physiology he's an essential part of the team.

"I'm completely new to motocross and when I sat down with Rich and he said 'look, this is the season' I remember thinking 'what the hell do you want me to do with that?'," says Carl. >>





## Vascular assessment **AN END TO ARM-PUMP?**

"One thing we haven't really assessed yet – we'll probably address it when we get into the season – is the dreaded arm-pump," says Carl. "This is a vascular problem where basically your not getting the flow through the forearm purely because you're gripping the bike."

"There are strategies and training implementations and nutritional implementations that we're going to put in place to try and limit that. I do a lot of forearm work in my training programme and I think the guys already are not as worried anymore based around the strength work that they're doing."

"If it happens then there are things we're going to try and work on – there are nutritional things that I'm not going to let on about that we can do."



*Carl Langan-Evans collects some important data from his work with the RMJ Academy students*





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Rich-Mike puts his students through their paces in more organic settings



## Neuroscience THE BRAIN GAME

"With neuroscience what we're looking at is the link between the cognitive element of performance and the physiology and the biomechanics," says Carl. "So we use things like the eye-trackers, psychological programmes – basically brain training, working on reaction times, response times, things like that."

"These guys ride every week – it's like no sport I've ever seen in my entire life – and it will be really interesting for us to examine what is going on with these guys over a whole season."

"This is the first study of its kind in the UK and it's going to get better all the time. What we do this year will pale in comparison to what we'll do next year and the year after that."

"The whole programme is a completely individualised rider approach based around all the testing that we do and not just a blanket programme that every rider follows."

By treating each rider on an individual basis, specific weaknesses and strengths can be identified which in turn will ensure programmes are tailor-made.

"A lot of this stuff is done in a lot of other sports. Probably the one we'll measure it against the most will be cyclists mainly because their seasonal schedule is very similar – the nature of what they're doing is pretty similar, particularly probably BMX cyclists."

"We wouldn't be measuring our guys against them but particularly for a baseline we'd be using it as a comparative measure. Once we've got this data in year one, year two we've got something to measure against ourselves."

"People say that motocross is the toughest sport in the world but is it as tough as the Tour de France? We've got that data so let's compare it and see if it is. That's the beauty of doing this – it helps us assess the biochemical stress that's going on."

The technology available at LJMU is as good as it gets. Remember the training scene from Rocky IV when Ivan Drago's every move is monitored and recorded? Well that's the Hollywood version of what academy members get up to.

One of the tools at the team's disposal is the Body Composition Assessment Suite.

"What we're interested here is basically how is their body composition in terms of body fat, muscle and bone structure changing over time," says Carl. "We've got the DXA [dual-energy

x-ray absorptiometry] scanner which is a very low radiographic scanner so it's like one-tenth of an x-ray."

"This gives us an output of a person's bone health in different regions and a summary of fat mass, lean tissue mass and bone mass and we can track these over the season. This goes a huge, huge way to all the nutrition design."

Deciding on what constitutes as ideal body composition for motocross won't purely be based on science. The team will also look at the appearance of other top riders', listen to Rich-Mike's opinions and take the riders' genetics – for instance are they naturally skinny – into account before making informed judgement calls.

Another tool is an environmental chamber that can replicate temperatures from Arctic to Saharan and altitudes from sea level to Himalayan.

"For example," says Carl, "looking at Adam Sterry who's going to going out the GPs in Qatar and Thailand. He's going to be leaving here in winter, he's not going to be heat acclimated so we're going to do a load of work with him before he goes in all of his moto gear to get him acclimated. By the time he gets to the event he'll be prepared and ready to perform."

"He'll train in there and we'll be playing around with things like hydration strategies and the potential use of ice vests for recovery between motos. A lot of it is mental acclimation – Adam going out for his first GP in Qatar and knowing that he'll be used to the heat."

The physiology lab collects samples taken from the riders including blood, sweat and urine which is then passed to the biochemistry lab for analysis.

"Specifically with the moto guys what me and Ste are really interested in is we want to look at how tough the season is on them biochemically," continues Carl. "We're looking at the potential to take some blood off them at the start of the season then mid-season and post-season and examine some markers of >>

The appliance of





Refuelling the body is important too!

## Biomechanics FEEL THE FORCE

"Everything we do in the institute has a performance angle and a clinical angle," says Carl. "We work with sport and exercise and health basically so with the biomechanics we're interested in the joints, angles, forces during sporting events that transfer through the body. It's the study of human movement."

"Just landing off a box on your own two feet can transfer anywhere up to two to four times your bodyweight. I would hypothesise that obviously with the moto guys with them travelling through the air and then landing it could be even more, even with suspension."

"With the snowboarders we were looking at the impact because they tend to get a hell of a lot of ACL injuries, knee, ankle, hip injuries."

"The problem with doing it with the moto guys specifically is that we can't drop a 100 kilo bike on top of the force plate from 30 feet but we can get a decent idea by doing a couple of other things."







# The applic SCI

RMJ may have discovered a way of measuring testicular fortitude although it doesn't seem so scientific to us...



Roadworks seem to be getting absolutely everywhere these days



things like muscular fatigue and stress just to have a look at the metabolic damage. That will then help us assess next year where are the high and low points in a season, what physiologically is actually happening to these guys.

"As I said, everything we do is very individualised to the rider so we'll be measuring things like creatine kinase, testosterone and cortisol – we'll look at a baseline at the start of the season, mid-season and end-of-season and that will give us a better idea."

Creatine kinase is a compound that's a by-product of muscle breakdown and by measuring the levels in a motocross rider they can make a direct comparison against levels they've already discovered in athletes from other sports.

"We've got these different markers and we pretty much know how hard a lot of sports are, we don't know how hard motocross is. That's why we're doing it and also that will then help us judge the programming and the way we interact with the riders throughout the season.

"It will help us feed into Rich and say 'this guy's markers are really high' and put things into place whether they be nutrition, recovery, specific training interventions. It informs our programme."

With so much data being collected I have to ask the question can they get too much information but Steve just laughs and says there's no such thing. Basically, if something figures in a rider's performance they want to know about it.

"Different track surfaces will have different effects on the riders' bodies too so deep sand such as Lommel is a lot more demanding," says Steve. "We need to look at the physiological differences – what makes it harder?"

"With Adam doing GPs we've got the opportunity to look at what a truly elite rider needs to make it on the world stage. It gives us an idea of where the younger lads need to be to compete at that level.

"We also need to look at what the difference is between GP competition and national competition – whether that be how much travelling they do, how much bike time they have and what are the effects of a GP compared to a national round. Using the kit we have at John Moores we can do that."

Adam's GP campaign this season will provide valuable data that riders competing on a purely domestic level couldn't provide.

"One of the other things I'm interested in is jetlag and travel fatigue because some of these guys are going to be travelling long distances," says Carl. "There are a lot of strategies that we can try and put into place to try and limit that – nutrition and things like

sleep patterns on flights, when to stay awake and when to go to sleep.

"We can even do some preparation before they go – it's all about getting a rider to the startline as prepped as they possibly can be."

Although the research is still in a very early stage the LJMU relationship with the RMJ Academy has already had positive results.

"Adam has had ongoing problems with his lower back on rougher circuits," says Rich-Mike. "His technique on rougher tracks – how he works his legs to keep the bike moving – is really good so in my eyes he just needed to get more endurance in his legs.

"Carl has done mobility tests and found that his hip flexors were shocking so he's given him exercises and he's not having problems now on rough sand tracks. Had I not got these guys involved I would have gone the complete opposite way."

The respect is mutual...

"Rich has been doing this for a long time and that's his approach, we have a different approach and I think by having this we get the best of both worlds," adds Carl. "There have been instances where we might have been a bit softly, softly and Rich has been bang on the money. It's an eclectic mix and the key pay-off for me is the buy-in from the riders. They're always there, they're always putting the effort in, they're always pushing. They believe in it."

There's an obvious question that needs an answer – what happens if the research leaks out? After all, it's a big investment by the RMJ Academy. Surprisingly, Rich-Mike isn't all that fussed.

"Maybe I should go down the route of making the findings private but part of me isn't too bothered if people use it because it's good for the sport," he says. "The information we find will allow us to build better programmes – obviously, I don't want my rivals having that information but if I'm not able to keep it private then at least it will take the sport to another level."

Keeping the research private is one thing but what happens if a rider defects to another trainer?

"I can't stop that but, apart from the PhD element, that's kinda how it already is. Touch wood, as a rule people don't leave me but if they do there's no way of stopping that but at the same time I won't hold back on what I give my riders.

"And if I give them everything I've got and do a good job then they won't go off. That's how I look at it."



# FIRST IMP

AFTER MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME AT OUR

Words by **Dan Grove** Photos by **Matt Dean**

**I**t's been a fairly warm but very wet winter which has kind of stopped me from getting some laps in but I finally wheeled the RM-Z out of the back of the team truck and onto some dirt. In truth it's been so wet around here that I haven't ridden it since the Mega Test which was absolutely ages ago. Hopefully by the time this issue hits the shelves I'll have put some proper motos in at a practice track and can report back next month with some decent feedback on the bike and how it performs out on the track.

I plan on leaving the bike in stock trim for the first few rides just to get a feel for the bike as it would be out of the dealership so that when any changes are made I can tell what difference it made, if any. With all the time off the bike I could have thrown the aftermarket book at it but then I wouldn't know the true capabilities of a stock 250F and as I'm new to them it's only fair to tell you the truth about the bike from scratch as I'm sure every year there's a lot of riders jumping up to a 250F from a 125, or with poor rules and regulations not forbidding it, an 85.

I have however put a little bit of time in on the bike around a little private track – and by little I >>



**DBR  
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# SESSIONS!

MEGA TEST, DAN AND THE RM-Z 250 FINALLY MEET UP FOR A FIRST DATE...

mean that it's just over a one minute lap time – so not ideal but it was still time on the bike which was better than not riding at all. The conditions were a bit on the soft side.

I used the time to just get all the controls in the right places and set the sag to 105mm as per the manual as this bike is totally different to a YZ250 especially the seating position. The RM-Z seat is completely flat except for the very front of it and this makes moving around the bike really easy compared to moving around on a bike with a low dip in the middle of the seat like I was used to.

Just before where the front of the seat curves up it was right in the sweet spot of where I sit for cornering so I think Suzuki have something really good here as you'll never be trying to pull yourself forwards to weight the front in the corners, you'll always be in the right place gripping the shrouds with your legs and the less you have to think about while riding the better...

As I've only ever owned two-strokes and the first thing that came to light when I set off was that the bike just hooks up from nothing. You could be barely moving and it would just pick up in second and third gear. Pretty crazy that they're in the same class as 125 two-strokes where this definitely isn't the case!

The track I rode was quite twisty with a few trees around the place and so on a two-stroke

you'd only want to be at about 80 per cent of your limits as when you got it on the pipe you'd soon be heading for a tree or a stream and then have to try and corner the thing. On the 250F the power was so controllable and usable even in the mud that you knew what the bike would be doing. It'll be good when it dries up a bit so I can get back down there and push the bike some more.

Due to the muddy conditions the brakes and suspension didn't really get a decent test so next time – even if I have to drive to Tain or Spain for some rideable tracks – I can give a full review of the bike in standard trim and from that I'll know a lot more about it which will help with personalising the bike for the upcoming season...





# DEXTER DOUGLAS FINALLY HITS THE TRACK AS THE PROJECT PROGRESSES...

Words by **Sean Lawless**  
Photos by **Nuno Laranjeira**

**T**his year in DBR we're going to be following the progress of Dexter Douglas who's got a supported ride from Husqvarna UK through the RMJ Academy.

Dexter broke his wrist at the end of last season but after six weeks off the bike he started to turn a few laps in the New Year.

We caught up with him in Spain in mid-January where he was making the most of the weather and the hardpack tracks to ensure he will be race-ready in time for the new season kicking off.

Dexter flew out at the start of last month along with other members of the Pro wing of the RMJ Academy and after a tentative start everything began to slot into place for the 16-year-old from Blackburn.

"I've been training in the hotel gym and riding but not at 100 per cent because my wrist has been hurting a little bit," said Dexter. "It's getting better though and I'm starting to push harder on the bike."

"Because I haven't been able to ride hard Rich-Mike's had me working on my strength training in the evenings so I've been doing core strength and balance training and hill sprints."

Coming back from any injury is a process that shouldn't be rushed and Dexter's cautious approach was starting to pay off.

"I've ridden about eight days since we came to Spain and each day for about half-a-day if that but not at 100 per cent because I don't want to over-do it. I was rolling the jumps to start with but I am doing them all now."

"Rolling the jumps was very frustrating – everyone else was having fun whipping it and stuff and I couldn't do it."

With his recovery going to plan, Dexter set



# PRO

GFX 42  
SD 90





Dexter's getting to grips with his new FC250

himself the target of being up to full speed by the time he returned to the UK at the end of January.

"I'm hoping that when I get back from Spain I'll be at a point where I can push at 100 per cent for a full moto. I'm ready now to start doing the same moto lengths as the other Pro Academy riders but it'll be at a lower intensity. I'll also start doing some speed training but only for two to three laps at a time so I don't overdo it."

Although he was still not up to race pace when we spoke to him, Dexter had already formed a favourable impression of the 2016 FC250 he'll be racing this year in the Maxxis MXY2 championship and EMX250 series.

"The Husqvarna is a great bike. Even though I'm not pushing too hard on it yet I can feel what a great bike it is – it's mint."

"I'm really looking forward to getting out there and racing – I wanted to do the Hawkstone International but I just won't be ready in time for that so my first race back will be the opening round of the MX Nationals at Preston Docks at the beginning of March."

Rich-Mike Jones was keeping a close eye on Dexter as he guided him through his on-bike rehabilitation.

"I'm very happy with his progress," he said.

"The first week I was really nervous – he was very timid and not able to do much at all. We then gave him an extra day off and when he got back on the bike he was a different rider – his wrist felt stronger and he was able to push the boundaries on jumps."

"At this point he's where I want him to be with his injury recovery – I can't tell you how relieved I am because I thought we were way off and we're actually not as far off as I thought we were."

As well as being happy with Dexter's progress, Rich-Mike was also impressed with the 2016 FC250.

"Even though Dexter's not pushing as hard as he's capable of pushing at the moment it's really apparent how well the new bike works on hardpack compared to last year's model. The geometry is different and the bike really does turn so much easier."

**DBR will be following Dexter and the RMJ Academy Husqvarna every month so stay tuned for monthly updates...**

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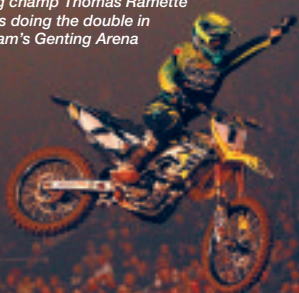




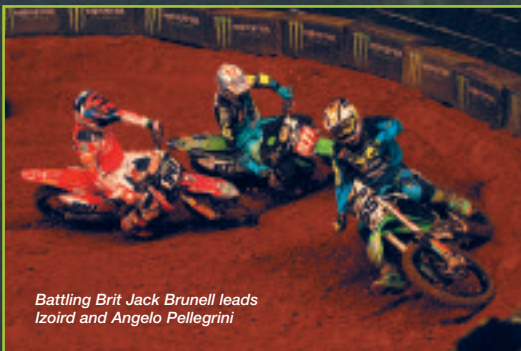
The Gallic channel hoppers have taken charge of the 2016 Monster Energy Arenacross Tour but which one of them is gonna end up as the champ?



*Defending champ Thomas Ramette celebrates doing the double in Birmingham's Genting Arena*



*Battling Brit Jack Brunell leads Izoid and Angelo Pellegrini*



*Cedric Soubeyras leads the series with just two rounds to go*



*Cyrille Coulon battles it out with the boys in Newcastle*







Following on from Manchester – that was the opening night of the 2016 Monster Energy Arenacross Tour powered by Ford Ranger – we’ve had four weekends of brilliant double-headers on the bounce as the outstanding series headed north to Glasgow, across the Irish Sea to Belfast, south east to Birmingham and finally back oop north again to Newcastle. It’s been a relentless grind, amazingly entertaining and at times bloody brutal but that’s half the charm of this awesome race series.

Any time you put together a plethora of professional dirt bike racers on a tight indoor track with this much money on the line then you know you’re gonna see fireworks. The first nine rounds of this 11 stop tour have been epic for many a reason and the final two rounds ought to be classics n’all with pride, points and piles of pound notes still to be scrapped over in Sheffield and London.

As things stand right now the fight for the tour title seems to be between the two guys who were tied on points after the season opener – that’s defending Arenacross champion Thomas Ramette and new boy Cedric Soubeyras.

Ramette’s had an up n’ down kinda season so far as the #1 on the side of his Suzuki seems to be really alluring to the other racers out there who can’t seem to stop themselves from riding into it really, really hard. As an example Angelo Pellegrini wiped out the champ in Glasgow and then Soubeyras did a similar deed in Belfast with both occasions costing the SR75 Molson Suzuki rider big points. Wins in Belfast and Birmingham (x2) redressed the balance slightly but Thomas is still eight points behind Soubeyras in the title chase.

Cedric’s road to the red plate has been equally rocky although it seems to be self induced crashes that are keeping the #120 from streaking away. It should probably be noted that the Geartec Yamaha rider hadn’t won a main event before round eight in Newcastle – where he then dominated both nights – but he’s been particularly potent in the Head-to-Heads in which he’s picked up a massive 21 bonus points over the course of the tour. That would have been 22 had he not been disqualified for overly aggressive riding in Belfast.

If the points from the Head-to-Heads were dropped you’d find that Soubeyras and Ramette would be separated by a single point which kinda proves how closely matched the pair are in normal competition. Sheffield is bound to be wild as Ramette needs to close that gap ahead of the Wembley finale.

Currently third in the championship chase is Ramette’s SR75 Molson team-mate Cyrille Coulon. One of the more ‘mature’ guys on the tour Coulon is actually riding better than ever before and is frequently nothing short of brilliant on the bike. Probably the most technically proficient and sporting rider on the tour I doubt that the Frenchman’s front tyre has touched another bike or rider all year which is quite some feat given the tight nature of Arenacross racing.

It’s probably also worth pointing out that Coulon has had to qualify for the Main Event through the LCQ no fewer than four times – winning two along the way – which must gain him the title of King of the LCQ, right? Wrong, Angelo Pellegrini has also transferred through four LCQs but won three which gives him the nod. The Buildbase Honda rider has been unable to show that winning pace in the Main Events though and currently sits way back in eighth place in the series standings.

Pellegrini has probably influenced the outcome of the championship though as contact between himself and series leader Fabien Izoird in Birmingham ended the 2014 champ’s 2016 Arenacross tour with a broken tib and fib. To be fair it was more a racing accident than blatant takeout although a fair few of the other incidents he’s been involved in have been a little more questionable.

As well as losing Izoird in Birmingham Steve James was forced to look for a second replacement rider as Josh Hansen surprisingly withdrew from the series. Up until that point Hanny had been inconsistent at best and >>





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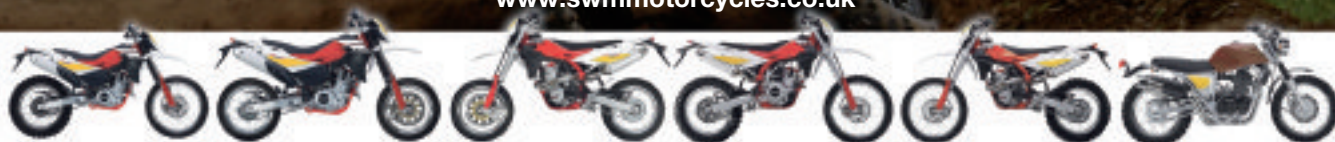
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aside from a masterful ride through the pack in Glasgow had failed to shine either on or off the track.

While Steve could have taken the easy option and combined his two teams (bringing Jack Brunell across from the SJR camp into the LPE set-up) he did the honourable thing and drafted in two reserves for Newcastle – Xavier Boog for LPE and Julien Bill into the SJR team. Both are former factory stars and showed their class by immediately getting down to business – I hope they can both finish off the rest of the tour and are considered for full-time positions next year.

Back to Brunell for a moment and he's currently battling it out with fellow Brit Adam Chatfield over fifth in the series. Currently separated by a single point it's like 2013 all over again when the pair scrapped it out to the wire in the inaugural Arenacross tour. Chatfield won that battle but on current form I'd say Brunell is more likely to end the championship as top Brit as Chatfield just seems slightly off-kilter although he did step up in Newcastle with a solid third place.

Trailing Chatfield and Brunell in the points chase is last year's runner-up Florent Richier who after a slow start to the year – when he was possibly getting used to the KX450F again after racing a YZ250F for the majority of 2015 – has really started picking up the pace. In both Birmingham and Newcastle Flo showed main winning speed and is now definitely a real threat to win one before the year is out.

Young Brit Matt Bayliss started the year strong in Manchester where he won a heat race and has remained consistent ever since except for a blip in Newcastle where he failed to qualify for the night one main. A true privateer, Matt is currently ninth in the series standings and having come through the amateur ranks of the pre-Arenacross tour FWSX championships is a real positive role model to the young guns in the 65, Super Mini and Pro Lites classes. Keeping plugging away kids and you too could be a bonafide British hero!

So there are just two rounds to go and with double points to play for at the season finale, the 2016 Monster Energy Arenacross Tour story is far from over. Sheffield Arena is the spiritual home of indoor racing in the UK and Wembley is equally brilliant so you can absolutely guarantee that the final two stops of the tour are going to be stunning.

It's fairly safe to say the winner of the championship will be French but there are a bunch of other scores to be settled too like who's gonna be best Brit and who is the real King of the LCQ! Who's your money on?



Jordan Booker blitzes the whoops







X Bladez Husqvarna pilot Collin Jurin will most likely end the series as the top American rider on the tour

## Monster Energy Arenacross Tour

### Series standings

1	Cedric Soubeyras	171
2	Thomas Ramette	163
3	Cyrille Coulon	139
4	Fabien Izoid	128
5	Adam Chatfield	116
6	Jack Brunell	115
7	Florent Richier	101
8	Angelo Pellegrini	100
9	Matt Bayliss	99
10	Josh Hansen	79







Nez Parker tries to remember if he left the gas cooker on – he hadn't



Baldog's Aaron Powley

## FMX Frenzy!

UK freestylers display aerial supremacy . . .

Arenacross ain't all about the racing and show goers also get a fairly hardcore freestyle fix from top Brits Edgar Torronteras, Dan 'Tron' Whitby, Samson Eaton, Arran Powley, Jamie Squibb and former DBR test pilot Nez Parker - who throws down the phattest whips ever to come out of Leyland – as well as FMX legend Edgar Torronteras. The highlight (aside from Dan Whitby's Tron Cycle bit) has to be the FMX show-closing trains – choo choo!



Did anyone see which way Dan Whitby went?



Jamie Squibb chucks out a phat 'un

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# FLASH HARRY!



KIMBER'S KICKING ASS AS THE ARENACROSS TOUR BLOWS THROUGH GLASGOW, BELFAST, BIRMINGHAM AND NEWCASTLE...

Following the opening round of the Monster Energy Arenacross Tour in Manchester, double headers in Glasgow, Belfast, Birmingham and Newcastle means we're nine rounds down with two left to run. The penultimate round goes off at Sheffield Arena on February 13 ahead of the London Wembley Arena finale on Feb 27.

In the 65s, nine year old nipper ripper Kieran Boughen going up against Ollie Colmer has been the all engrossing headline grabber. With the series advantage swinging back and forth it's been compelling stuff and between them they've scooped every race win.

That said, both guys had a single race nightmare each in Belfast as Tye Jones took the round five overall going 2-3. Taking a glance at the 65 class series statistics, Boughen has most heat wins (10) and most overall victories (five) and he leads the championship by six points. For Boughen the Genting Arena proved a massive turning point as he swapped some previous round inconsistency for crushing domination. All four wins in Birmingham meant he reclaimed the championship

lead and next up it was home turf for Colmer in Newcastle. One round win apiece there and that keeps the title nicely in the balance. In another tight scrap for series third, Jak Taylor is just eight points in front of Jones.

With 13 heat wins reigning champion Harry Kimber is the stand out monster force in the 85s. Other overall round victories have gone to Ben Burridge in Belfast and Lewis Hall in Birmingham but by his own admission Team Green's Hall - weighing in a couple of stones heavier than some - is hampered getting his bike off the line.

In comparison there are no such worries for his team buddy Kacey Hird who has won three motos. Flyweight Hird has generally been very entertaining as typically highlighted by his thrilling if somewhat unlucky 14th birthday show in Birmingham. In the title race Kimber has a 51 point lead while Hird and Hall are virtually joined at the hip battling for series second. Adding much to the show with some podium appearances, feisty Preston Williams and Ben Clayton are shooting it out for championship fourth.

In the Pro Lites, what can be said about runaway leader Joe Clayton? With seven round victories to his name - and all seven claimed with double moto wins - he's only been beaten twice in eighteen races! A barnstorming ride from the back absolutely underlined his superiority at the Genting Arena and Mighty Joe now leads the championship by 36 points ahead of George Clarke. Just behind the leading pair Jordan Moxey and Edward Briscoe have been the other two evenly matched regulars consistently making the podium.

## SERIES STANDINGS

**65cc**  
1 Kieran Boughen 319, 2 Ollie Colmer 313, 3 Jak Taylor 255, 4 Tye Jones 247, 5 Ezra Blackwell 216

**Super Mini**  
1 Harry Kimber 343, 2 Kacey Hird 292, 3 Lewis Hall 291, 4 Preston Williams 263, 5 Ben Clayton 260

**Pro Lites**  
1 Joe Clayton 351, 2 George Clarke 315, 3 Jordan Moxey 279, 4 Edward Briscoe 254, 5 Josh Greedy 231





# MAXXIS MANIA!

MX2 SERIES SET TO SCORCH AGAIN THIS SUMMER

**T**aking it to the next level is a phrase much in vogue at the moment and that very much appears to be the plan for Maxxis MX2 in 2016.

Back in 2007 the series began as a three round experiment – showcasing the best of British youth talent. Over the years the championship increased to four rounds and then five and with the demise of BYMX the Maxxis MX2 certainly became the toughest challenge for the under 18s.

In 2016 the series goes large and will feature at all eight rounds of Maxxis. This marks a major step in its evolution – and surely says ‘win this and you are the true British Youth Champion’ – although the ACU say different and are adamant that the BYN series is the only true British Championship title on offer.

Irish tripper Graeme Irwin was a bit of an unknown quantity when he made headlines as he became the inaugural 2007 winner as a 15 year old. Edward Allingham won it in 2008, Josh Waterman edged out Luke Hawkins in 2009 and in 2010 Connor Walkley was king. The following year in an epic series Ryan Houghton won it up against the like of Nathan Watson, Adam Sterry, Jamie McCanney and James Dunn. Dan Thornhill hit gold in 2012, Rob Davidson beat Matthew Callaghan for top spot in 2013 and in a 2014 thriller Josh Gilbert beat off the challenge of Oli Osmaston and Liam Knight. Osmaston was the clear cut champion last year, so who looks favourite in 2016?

If age and experience count towards making a favourite Feehily MX runner Henry Williams certainly fits the bill. Fifth in last year's championship and with the top four all moving into the pro ranks Williams is the highest placed survivor from 2015. Williams the 2015 MX Nationals champion is up against Jamie Carpenter (Pheonix Tools Honda) and the 2015 Pirelli Masters supremo is just one of the interesting prospects.

Others with age and experience to call on and fully capable of taking a moto win include Michael Ellis, Brett Pocock and Ethan Gatenby. At the other end of the age scale fifteen year old George Grigg-Pettitt (Carl Nunn KTM) has the tools to lead the pack, as do section newcomers Jack Bintcliffe (Honda UK Rookies), along with Team Green's Jed Etchells and Dylan Woodcock.

Both Dexter Douglas (RMJ – Husqvarna UK) and Alexander Brown (Apico Husqvarna) are sure to feature – they have experience from last years series as do Billy King, Aaron Booker, Tayla Smith and Tommie Schofield (Honda UK Rookies). Throw into the mix the likes of Jake Edey (Gear4 KTM), Callum Green (Husqvarna UK), Charlie Cole (Husky Sport Husqvarna), Kathryn Booth, Ben Clark and Archie Osmaston and it's clear to see virtually every aspect is covered. Age, experience, gender, it's all there – and it's looking like the most open championship ever. It all kicks off at Lyng March 20.

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# TALENT SPOTTING!

KEEPING AN EYE ON AUTO ACE HARRY THICKETT

**T**aking a look back over the past dozen years or so it's clear to appreciate that some kid's natural talent dazzles at a very young age. In fact, some of them so good it was an absolute no brainer to suggest they had years of headline grabbing to come.

Winning a Junior BYMX title at just nine years old Luke Hawkins was way ahead of the game in 2004. Picking out a few more, at the same age of nine Adam Sterry, Ben Watson and Conrad Mewse were all prodigious in the extreme. They had that something extra and it was easy to predict they would all go on to greater things.

Abie Wilkie was the nine year old whipper ripper troubling the establishment at the tail end of the '09 season and he went on to be ACU 2010 65cc champion. Like wise at nine years old Alexander Brown came on strong in the closing stages of the 2010 championship, going on to be a clear cut winner of BYMX in 2011.

The trick for spotting the outstanding burgeoning talent – predicting the following year's 65cc champion – was something of a tried and tested formula back then. Come the closing stages of the national season simply spot the best nine year old terror bashing up the older kids.

In more recent years with the growth of National Auto championships the talent spotting starts at a younger age. Louie Kessell at eight was

a standout 50cc Nationals champ and incidentally at the close of his winning season Kessell came under pressure from seven year old Charlie Heyman. The following year, Heyman absolutely cleaned up in the 50cc GT Cup ranks and in 2014 Ollie Colmer put it all together in the closing stages to snatch GT National Auto gold.

In 2015 Ben Mustoe was the BSMA Auto champion with an amazing series white wash as Riley Keene overpowered McKenzie Marshall for the ACU title. They all move up into junior racing for 2016 as last years youngest champion, Harry Thickett – winner of the ACU 6/7 age British title – goes for National gold again in the 7/8 age MCF series.

Picking up the theme of coming on strong in the second half of the season, that was certainly the case for little Harry T last year. He won the lion's share – six heat wins – in the second half of the season. It'll be interesting to see if Harry can keep that momentum going. Rage caught up with Harry along with his mum Janine.

**Rage:** Hi Janine. What's Harry been up to since winning the 6-7 age British Auto Championship.

**JT:** "After the season finished, a well deserved short break from riding to recover energies was in order and then he spent a few weeks just having fun on his bike."

**Rage:** Looking forward, what's the preparation routine for 2016? And what does Harry need to work on?

**JT:** "Harry has a lot of things to improve as there's always room for improvement. He's been working hard on technique and his race pace for next season and coming to the season he will spend a lot of time working on starts so he is 100 per cent ready. He works with former youth champion and now Geartec Yamaha runner Micky Eccles. They have a good relationship and they know what needs to be sorted to get the job done."

**Rage:** What are Harry's favourite three tracks and which championship round did he enjoy most in 2015?

**JT:** "Harry's favourite three tracks to ride are FatCat MP, Hilton Park and Kieradan Park. He likes sand best and goes to FatCat a lot – that was his favourite round last year."

**Rage:** Apart from the MX Premier championship where else will Harry race in 2016?

**JT:** "Harry's really looking forward to MX Master Kids UK at the end of April, other than that event and the MX Premier series it will be club championships."

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